

Client Fact Sheet #20

Arthritis

Arthritis is a wear and tear disease affecting the joints and is common in cats and dogs. It can occur in any of the joints in the body and results in pain in the affected area.

Many people with older pets believe their pets are getting around more slowly because of normal old age, but many are in fact suffering from arthritis that can be treated. In animals, arthritis can be hard to detect, because the symptoms appear gradually.

Symptoms your pet may display include,

- Difficulty getting up after rest
- Stiffness after exercise
- Lameness
- Difficulty getting in and out of the car
- Difficulty getting up and down stairs or on and off furniture
- Personality changes.

Do not accept these symptoms as an inevitable part of aging. Your pet is in pain.

Diagnosis involves a thorough physical examination, x-rays and possibly joint fluid analysis.

Treatment

Weight management.

Excess weight reduces mobility and speeds up the progression of arthritis. The best thing you can do for an overweight pet with arthritis is to get them to loose weight. There are commercial weight reducing diets available. If you need a hand to get your pet to lose weight we have Fact Sheets on weight control and we even have a weight reduction programme that is supervised by one of our support staff.

Exercise

Regular gentle exercise (such as walking or swimming) helps to maintain mobility, as joints that do not have regular movement can stiffen up. However do not exercise to the extent that the pet is stiff and sore the next day. Massage and gentle flexion/extension of the joint may also help.

Warm soft bedding.

Keep your pet comfortable by providing a warm bed away from draughts. Make sure that the bed is thick enough to cushion affected joints.

Nutritional supplements

Products such as *Green Lipped Mussel*, *Glucosamine* and *Chondroitin Sulphate* have been shown to have a beneficial affect by stimulating the repair of damaged cartilage and promoting an increase in joint fluid production thereby improving joint function. These products need to be given daily and it can take up to eight weeks before any improvement in your pet's mobility is seen.

Prescription Drugs

There are many types of prescription medications for the treatment of arthritis. As all pets are individuals and respond differently to treatments, we may need to change medications until we find the one that suits your pet. Many human drugs cannot be used in cats and dogs.

There are two main drug treatments.

Pentosan polysulphate

Pentosan (*Pentarthron*) is an injectable drug that is given weekly, for four weeks, and then as required. Normally there is not a lot of improvement until after the fourth injection but the improvement that does occur often lasts three to six months. Once your pet starts to deteriorate again, a booster injection is given. Pentosan works by stimulating the repair of damaged cartilage and promoting an increase in joint fluid production thereby improving joint function.

Non Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAID's)

NSAID's provide immediate relief of the pain and inflammation, associated with arthritis. They are well tolerated by most animals, but a small number can develop side effects. The most commonly seen side effects are loss of appetite, lethargy, vomiting and/or diarrhoea, and changes in water intake.

NSAID's are usually given once or twice daily, by mouth. Examples of NSAID's are *Rimadyl*, *Metacam* and *Ketofen*

RECOMMENDED DIET:

Hills J/D or Waltham Mobility diet

If you have any questions please feel free to ask one of our experienced staff, or phone us on 818 5697.