



What is Arthritis?

Arthritis is one of the most common ailments seen in middle-aged to older pets. Even younger dogs and cats, under the right circumstances, can suffer from arthritic changes. Arthritis causes changes within the affected joints that are painful for the affected pet. This inflammation occurs when the smooth cartilage surfaces within the joints become damaged and no longer allow 'frictionless' joint motion. This pain is responsible for many of the signs associated with arthritis.

“How do I know if my pet has arthritis?”

Arthritis, and other causes of joint pain, can present themselves in subtle ways. Being generally quiet and lethargic and loss of enthusiasm for exercise, can all be early indicators that your pet may be suffering arthritis. If, and when, the arthritis becomes worse, your pet may;

- Suffer pain or discomfort when getting up or lying down
- Find jumping up on to elevated surfaces difficult
- Reluctant to climb stairs
- Stiffer in the mornings, especially cold mornings, but then get better throughout the day

Arthritis is more likely if your pet is over-weight, getting older or has a history of joint damage or surgery.

“What can I do about my pet’s arthritis?”

There are three main factors to consider when approaching the treatment of arthritis;

1. Relieving the pain and reducing the inflammation
2. Stimulation and repair of damaged cartilage
3. Weight control

Arthritis is a painful, inflammatory condition that can be very distressing for you and your pet. The use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (like Previcox, Metacam, Rimadyl, etc) can immediately reduce the pain and begin the process of combating the inflammation.

Improving Joint Health:

Our major goal here is to decrease chronic inflammation to allow comfort and ease of movement. We have a few ways of doing this

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Drs Jason Wendt BVSc (Hons), Scot Campbell BVSc (Hons) MACVSc DACVN & Associates

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- The Pentosan Polysulfate injection, brand 'Zydax' or 'Cartrophen', which improves blood flow to the joint and joint fluid viscosity, basically getting the whole thing to move smoother. This decreases inflammation and slows the progression of osteoarthritis disease. This is one injection per week for 4 weeks, then ongoing once per 3 months for life.
- Nutrition/supplements: 4cyte is my preferred one, as it includes a whole range of anti-arthritic supplements.
 - Green-lipped mussel oil is one of the few proven natural anti-inflammatories.
 - Omega-3 oils decrease inflammatory compounds and improve immune function, these are found in deep-sea fish, fish, krill and calamari oils, of which I usually recommend about half a teaspoon a day for a dog Alfie's size.
 - Turmeric contains 'curcumin', a compound with excellent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects, however commercial formulations often have issues getting this delivered in useful amounts to the body (black pepper can apparently help 'activate' curcumin).
 - Chondroitin is a compound used by the body for cartilage repair, these are found in your shark-cartilage, gelatins etc.
 - Antioxidants always help 'scavenge free-radicals', which are compounds found in the body that cause damage when chronic injury is present.

4cyte has most of these therapeutics, its biggest side effect is possible constipation. They can all be given individually, however monitor Tash's weight if you give her supplements (especially the oils) as they tend to be quite high-calorie (which may be of benefit in her case)

- Low-impact muscle-strengthening: swimming is great for this, also gentle walks and so on. Definitely avoid twisting/high bouncing e.g. Frisbee throws and ball chase. Physiotherapeutic exercises such as lying Alfie down and slowly rotating through a range of natural movements for 5-10 minutes daily will get the joint fluid moving and can help with healing/health. Animal physios do exist, we have a nurse who's studied this so if you're chasing more info let me know.

Managing Joint Health with Prescription Diets:

Improving your pet's mobility is as easy as feeding the right nutrition. Being proactive about mobility issues early can avoid the need for more aggressive treatments. Hill's™ Prescription Diet™ j/d™ helps your dog walk, run and jump more easily in as little as 21 days. Hill's™ Prescription Diet™ j/d™ Canine is a complete and balanced food that provides all the nutrition dogs need.

How It Works:

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- Therapeutic levels of omega-3 fatty acids
- Enriched with glucosamine & chondroitin sulfate
- Controlled calories & added L-carnitine
- Clinically proven antioxidants

How it Helps:

- Helps preserve joint cartilage
- Helps maintain a healthy weight and avoid extra stress on joints
- Supports a healthy immune system

Arthritis is a very common condition and can be very painful. The good news is that, with recent advancements in medication and nutrition, getting older no longer has to be a painful process.

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