

ARTHRITIS

ARTHRITIS is also known by the medical term “**Osteoarthritis.**” It is a disease resulting in degeneration of one or more joints of the body.

Reasons joints become affected with arthritis include injury, birth defects resulting in malformation, and aging.

As a result of whatever the cause, the slick surface of the bones in the joint (cartilage) is worn away exposing the underlying bone which is much rougher. As inflammation from the roughened edges rubbing within the joint, the joint capsule (lining of the joint), ligaments, and adjacent muscles become irritated and scarred.

The above description of the development of arthritis makes it easy to see why your pet may not want to do simple ordinary things such as running, jumping, or even walking in severe cases. The pet may first appear stiff on the afflicted leg. As it progresses over time, a limp may become noticeable and eventually your pet will have difficulty in rising from a lying or sitting position.

Signs of Osteoarthritis include:

1. Lameness
2. Hot, swollen joints
3. Pain, especially with exercise
4. Decreased “range of motion” (shorter steps)
5. Decrease in muscle size

Treatment of Osteoarthritis attempts to:

1. Reduce pain
2. Prevent or slow down degeneration of the bone
3. Restore function as much as possible

Diagnosis of Osteoarthritis includes:

1. History
2. Physical examination
3. Radiographs (x-rays)
4. Joint fluid analysis

Treatment for Osteoarthritis may include the following:

- Rest; keep warm and dry; use soft bedding, such as “egg crate mattress”
- Weight loss to decrease overall pressure on joints
- Anti-inflammatory drugs
- Drugs to increase joint fluid
- Non-weight bearing exercise (such as swimming) to maintain muscle strength and range of motion.
- Surgical correction (knee replacement, joint removal, joint replacement, etc.)

There is NO CURE for Osteoarthritis--BUT Life CAN be Made MORE COMFORTABLE!!!!

It is important to RE-EVALUATE regularly to evaluate effectiveness of treatment and progression of disease.