

Name

Date



# Caring for your dog STIFFNESS and ARTHRITIS



**Most older dogs** have aches and pains just as older people do. Some experience stiffness or lameness others just "slow down".

**Younger active dogs** often experience periods of stiffness or lameness just like high performance athletes and may require treatments quite different from arthritic older dogs.

**Most dogs with stiffness** or arthritis can be greatly improved by **1. Correct Medication** ✓ and **2. Lifestyle Changes.** ✓

## 1. Medication

**"Cartrophen"** - The greatest advance in arthritis treatment we have seen (not yet available for humans!) It stimulates the healing cells within the joint to renew the joint cartilage and can actually reverse arthritis. A course of 4 injections at weekly intervals, maintained to effect as required at approx. 2 mo. intervals thereafter. The benefit to the dog can be dramatic.

**Anti-inflammatories** - The last few years have seen a great leap forwards in relief from pain and inflammation associated with arthritis.

**"Rimadyl"** (small, or tasty chewable tablets) or **"Loxicam"** (drops in the food) used regularly will usually maintain good mobility.

Both of these anti-inflammatories work well with **"Cartrophen"**.

**Anabolic injection monthly** - strengthens muscles weakened by arthritis.

## 2. Lifestyle Changes

**Weight Control** Weight today ..... Ideal weight .....

**Take the weight off the legs and they'll work much better!**

Feed a good quality low-calorie diet. **Hill's R/D**, a high fibre, low calorie food helps burn off excess fat by raising metabolic rate. N.B. "Light" diets are not low calorie enough to reduce weight. Bring your dog for re-weighting with the nurse every 2-3 wks - Weight-Watchers Works!

**The Veterinary Health Centre 2011 - Phone 01254 53622**

The vet may advise a slimming medicine to reduce appetite and to reduce fat absorption.

**Raised Food Bowls** - It is not easy for older dogs to eat or drink from a bowl at floor level. They will strain their back and neck in the process. Raising the food and drink bowl to chin level makes life easier for an older dog.

**Exercise** - Regular controlled exercise is essential - keep moving! Make it interesting and stimulating, gradually stretch your dog's capabilities. Ideally exercise on level grassland. Avoid hills or rough ground. For hindleg problems try a steady walk down a gentle slope and get a lift back. For foreleg problems try a steady walk up a gentle slope. Avoid overdoing it on good days!

As mobility improves begin 20 min. power-walk session three times a day.

**Avoid Stairs and Slippery Surfaces** - Many dogs improve greatly if they avoid stairs. Coming down stairs is very harsh on the shoulders. Consider using a child gate to stop access to the stairs. Carpeted floors provide a surer footing than laminate wood flooring. Trainers (bootees) for dogs can help arthritic dogs walk on laminate floors - you'll find them on the internet.

**Hydrotherapy** - This is an excellent way of regaining strength in tired or ageing limbs - Try the **Water Treadmill at Myerscough College** (01995 642216), Other local hydrotherapy centres can be found on the internet.

**Nutraceuticals** - nutritional supplements may help joint health in some cases. They are widely used in humans but the evidence that they give any real benefit is sparse. We believe that weight reduction, anti-inflammatories and Cartrophen are far more useful than nutraceuticals.

### Further Investigation

**Blood Tests** - A routine blood test is recommended for any dog that is on long-term arthritis medication.

**X-Rays** of the spine and limbs will identify any specific areas of trouble. Some treatment are best given by injection directly into the affected joint.

**Other Tests** - Joint fluid, Thyroid and Rheumatoid tests may be helpful.

◆ *If you are insured, tests and x-rays should be re-claimable.*

◆ **Treat early to keep your dog mobile and active**

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