

Understanding Arthritis in Dogs: Effective Treatment Strategies

Arthritis, a condition characterized by inflammation of the joints, affects millions of dogs worldwide, causing discomfort, pain, and decreased mobility. As pet owners, it's crucial to recognize the signs of arthritis in our furry companions and understand the various treatment options available to improve their quality of life.

Causes: Arthritis in dogs, also known as osteoarthritis or degenerative joint disease, is a common condition affecting older dogs but it also occurs frequently in younger animals due to genetic predispositions, joint injuries, or developmental issues. The condition involves the breakdown of cartilage within the joints, leading to pain, stiffness, and reduced range of motion.

Clinical Signs: Symptoms of arthritis in dogs may include limping, difficulty getting up or lying down, reluctance to climb stairs or jump, stiffness, decreased activity levels, and changes in behavior. In the early stages, these signs may be intermittent. Identifying these symptoms early is crucial for prompt intervention and management.

Treatment: While arthritis in dogs is not curable, various treatment options can help manage pain, improve joint function, and enhance the overall quality of life for affected pets. These treatment strategies may include:

➤ Medications:

- **Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs):** NSAIDs such as carprofen, meloxicam, and firocoxib are commonly prescribed by veterinarians to reduce inflammation and alleviate pain in arthritic joints.
- **Analgesics:** Pain-relieving medications such as tramadol, gabapentin and amantadine may be used in conjunction with NSAIDs to provide additional relief from discomfort.
- **Disease-Modifying Osteoarthritis Drugs (DMOADs):** DMOADs like Adequan or polysulfated glycosaminoglycans (PSGAGs) are injectable medications that help improve joint health and slow the progression of arthritis.

➤ Nutritional Supplements:

- **Glucosamine and Chondroitin:** These supplements support joint health by providing essential building blocks for cartilage repair and maintenance. They may be combined with MSM and other nutritional products for joint health.
- **Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** Omega-3 supplements have anti-inflammatory properties and may help reduce joint inflammation and pain.

➤ Weight Management:

- **Maintaining a healthy weight** is crucial for dogs with arthritis as excess weight places additional strain on their joints, exacerbating pain and

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discomfort. A balanced diet and regular exercise tailored to their abilities can help manage weight effectively.

➤ Physical Therapy and Exercise:

- Low-impact exercises such as frequent gentle walks can help strengthen muscles, improve joint flexibility, and maintain overall mobility. Physical therapy modalities like hydrotherapy, controlled therapeutic exercise, therapeutic Laser and therapeutic ultrasound may also provide significant benefits.

➤ Environmental Modifications:

- Making adjustments to the dog's environment, such as providing orthopedic bedding, ramps or steps to assist with mobility, and minimizing slippery surfaces, can help alleviate stress on arthritic joints.

➤ Alternative Therapies:

- Acupuncture, PEMF therapy and intra-articular injections with platelet-rich plasma, hyaluronic acid or stem cells are other treatment options that some pet owners explore to complement conventional medical management for arthritis in dogs. Many pet owners report positive outcomes with these modalities.

- Librela (also known as Bedinvetmab) is a monoclonal antibody therapy for dogs, specifically designed for the treatment of osteoarthritis (OA). It works by targeting and neutralizing nerve growth factor (NGF), which plays a crucial role in the transmission of pain signals associated with osteoarthritis. It is administered by injection monthly.

Prognosis: Arthritis is a common and often debilitating condition in dogs, but with early detection and comprehensive management strategies, affected pets can lead comfortable and fulfilling lives. By working closely with veterinarians and implementing a tailored treatment plan that may include medications, nutritional supplements, weight management, physical therapy, environmental modifications, and alternative therapies, pet owners can effectively alleviate pain and improve the overall well-being of their furry companions living with arthritis.