



ARTHRITIS IN CATS AND DOGS

- Also known as 'degenerative joint disease' (DJD), it is a painful, incurable and progressive disease that substantially affects mobility and quality of life.
- Often mistaken by owners as just 'old age'.
- In most cases arthritis occurs secondary to a lifetime of wear and tear although it is also seen in younger animals following damage to a joint (e.g. a ruptured cruciate ligament) or due to malformation of a joint such as in hip dysplasia.
- Clinical signs:
 - Favouring a limb
 - Difficulty sitting or standing
 - Sleeping more
 - Seeming to have stiff, sore or swollen joints
 - Hesitancy to jump, run or climb stairs
 - Decreased activity or less interest in play and associated weight gain
 - Being less alert
 - Licking or chewing at skin overlying joints
 - Areas of muscle wastage
- Advanced DJD may be diagnosed on clinical examination, mild to moderate DJD may require radiographs for definitive diagnosis.
- Treatment:
 - It is important that the primary cause is addressed if possible i.e. rupture of the cranial cruciate ligament needs to be repaired in most cases before effective treatment of arthritis can begin
 - The aims of treatment is to control pain to improve quality of life, the condition is progressive and incurable
 1. Rest:
 - Acute flare-ups require a period of rest
 - Once signs are controlled exercise can be gradually re-introduced
 2. Pain relief:
 - Anti-inflammatories – these need to be given either daily with food (Metacam or Rimadyl/Carprogesic) or once a month (Trocoxil – not for cats)
 - Cartrophen – Injections given once a week for 4 weeks as an initial course then once every 3 months
 3. Weight control:
 - Carrying excess weight puts extra strain on the joints and can make arthritis worse
 - Consult your vet about your dog/cats ideal weight and how to achieve it in a controlled manner
 4. Exercise:
 - Regular, daily exercise for short periods with rest in-between is ideal for arthritis sufferers
 - Controlled exercise is better i.e. lead walks rather than running and





- chasing balls
 - Long periods of strenuous exercise such as chasing balls can worsen signs
5. Hydrotherapy:
- Allows exercise of soft tissues without impacting joint
 - Weekly swimming improves muscle tone and joint mobility
 - Aids weight control
 - Highly recommended for arthritis sufferers

