

ARTHRITIS IN DOGS

While advances in medicine and surgery have allowed people and pets to live longer lives, this aging population brings with it an increased frequency of age-related disorders. One example is arthritis. An estimated 20% of all adult dogs—or more than 8 million—will eventually develop arthritis. But arthritis is not just a senior dog problem. Even young animals can require treatment for a variety of arthritic disorders such as hip dysplasia.

Signs of arthritis may include:

- q Trouble going up and down stairs.
- q Not wanting to play or walk as long as before.
- q Pain when moving suddenly.
- q Difficulty getting up in the morning or after naps.
- q Pain when a joint is touched.
- q Increased difficulty when the weather is cold or wet.

The pain of arthritis is a direct result of changes to the joints, bones and surrounding tissues. NSAIDS (non steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) are frequently used to treat arthritis pain and inflammation. Commonly prescribed NSAIDS include phenylbutazone, Rimadyl, and Etogesic. As with all drugs, side effects may occur. The most commonly reported side effects with NSAIDS include vomiting, lethargy, and diarrhea. Other medications commonly used to treat arthritis include Glucosamine and Chondroitin supplements such as Cosequin. These nutritional supplements help improve the quality of the joint fluid and function of the joint. In severe cases, surgery may be necessary to control the pain from arthritis.

Managing arthritis in dogs includes lifestyle changes as well as medical therapies.

Several easy steps you can take to help you manage your dog's arthritis include:

- q Reduce your dog's stress by keeping a regular schedule and giving it plenty of attention.
- q Make sure your dog gets regular moderate exercise. Swimming is one of the best ways to exercise arthritic joints.
- q Maintain your pet's proper weight. Excess weight on a dog with arthritis often increases the pain.
- q Administer pain relief medication according to your doctor's instructions. Never give your pet human medication unless directed by your veterinarian.
- q See your veterinarian regularly to monitor progress.