

## **CRUCIATE LIGAMENT RUPTURE**

The cruciate ligaments in the knee consist of tough, fibrous tissue that connect the femur (thigh bone) to the tibia (shin bone), and help provide stabilization to the knee joint. Injuries to the cruciate ligaments often occur acutely and result in a sudden non-weight bearing lameness in the affected limb. The lameness often improves initially with rest and anti-inflammatory medication but over time the abnormal wear and tear on the unstable joint results in arthritis.

While any dog or cat may develop cruciate injuries, they are most common in active large breed dogs. Overweight pets or those with a previous history of hip or knee problems are most at risk. Some lines of dogs seem at increased risk of cruciate rupture at very young ages.

Cruciate Ligament Rupture is diagnosed based on symptoms and palpation and radiographs of the knee joint. Because the manipulation of the damaged joint during radiographs and palpation can be quite painful, these procedures are usually done under either heavy sedation or general anesthesia. Depending on the degree of damage, consultation with a board certified radiologist or surgeon is sometimes necessary to make the correct diagnosis.

Mild cases of cruciate injury in smaller pets can often be managed with limited exercise, rest, bandaging, and anti-inflammatory medication. Complete rupture of the ligaments in large dogs requires surgery to stabilize the knee joint and prevent crippling arthritis from developing. Overtime, a number of techniques have been developed to repair the damage and stabilize the joint. Currently, the recommended procedure is a surgery called the Tibial Plateau Leveling Osteotomy (TPLO.) This surgery requires specialized equipment and training and must be performed by a board certified surgeon specifically trained in this procedure.

Following surgery to repair a ruptured cruciate, it is critical that your pet rest in order to insure complete healing. Generally, 8 weeks of strict rest, followed by 8 weeks of leash walking, is necessary before your pet can resume normal activity levels. X-rays of the affected leg are usually taken 4 and 8 weeks after surgery to make sure healing is progressing normally.