

# ARTHRITIS IN DOGS

Arthritis is a disorder of any moveable joint anywhere in the body, resulting in decreased joint mobility, abnormal bone growth and pain. Potentially arthritis is a disease with crippling effects. Arthritis has many biochemical, bio-mechanical and pathological changes that are beyond the scope of this article but these changes continue to encourage our scientists to pursue further research. This research to date has provided people and animals with some very useful medication. Early diagnosis and treatment of arthritic conditions in most cases results in increasing the working life of your dogs and can be economically worthwhile whereas late diagnosis and treatment has a less successful long term outcome.

## HOW DO I KNOW IF MY DOG HAS ARTHRITIS?

- ❖ That dogs gait or action has changed.
- ❖ Not putting in the work they used to.
- ❖ Reluctant to jump in the ute, go for a walk, chase the ball or climb stairs.
- ❖ There's some muscle wasting over the dog's leg.
- ❖ Limp occasionally.
- ❖ Lying down a lot now, where once the dog would always sit or stand.
- ❖ Your dog looks very stiff when it first gets up but then warms out of it fairly quickly exercise starts.
- ❖ Some dogs actually lick or chew at a troublesome joint.
- ❖ Restlessness in a dog can be associated with a painful arthritis. Not being able to be comfortable. Some dogs withdraw from their normal happy working area.
- ❖ Lost appetite, crankiness, seeking warm spots or soft spots to lie.



REMEMBER THAT OUR ARTHRITIS IS OFTEN A DULL PAINFUL ACHE THAT NEVER GOES AWAY. WHAT MUST A DOG'S ARTHRITIS FEEL LIKE?

## HOW COULD MY DOG HAVE ARTHRITIS?

There are many causes and many different forms of arthritis. For a working dog, the most common cause is associated with some traumatic event. This can be direct damage to cartilage with subsequent inflammation occurring inside the joint. This inflammation changes the consistency or viscosity of the lubricating oil. The oily substance is called synovial fluid and as it loses its viscosity because of the inflammation, more damage is initiated, bone and cartilage grate on each other causing abnormal wear and bony growths to occur. With reduced lubricating ability it doesn't take long for the joint to show signs of degeneration. Other forms of arthritis might come about from muscle or ligament damage causing some laxity of the joint and abnormal motion, which then leads to cartilage damage. For all the other reasons how and why your working dog has arthritis – I suggest you discuss this with your veterinarian. If on physical exam there is no clinical evidence of arthritis ie reduced range of motion in a joint, then other causes of reduced exercise tolerance can be worked up. For example a previous episode of overheating or heartworm disease can present with reluctance to work, unable to keep up on big days, stiffness etc.

## TREATING MY DOG'S OSTEOARTHRITIS

Treatment could be just rest alone, eg. if an acute lameness is given time to recover then the dog may make a full recovery without developing arthritis. If not rested and not diagnosed then crippling arthritis may develop and prevent the dog from living out its life as a useful working companion. Once your vet has diagnosed arthritis, treatments other than rest will include medication and or surgery. Surgery is often the Rolls Royce approach but the best choice if fractures are involved. Repair by using internal surgical fixation will allow bones to heal faster, and reduce osteoarthritis developing. Medication on the other hand is very useful for a working dog that gets osteoarthritis from just hard work over an extended period. Medication may include non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agents. These have been receiving bad press with heart disease in people, however these products when used correctly and under veterinary supervision give good outcomes. There are also drugs that improve the quality and thickness of the synovial fluid (joint oil) that result in improved range of motion in arthritic joints. In recent years, research has produced products called disease-modifying agents, which appear to be quite beneficial in reducing the effects of osteoarthritis. These agents are called Glucosamines and Chondroitin Sulphate. If you suspect arthritis in your dog or it has an accident, call your local veterinarian and discuss all the options and possibilities.

## DIAGNOSIS OF ARTHRITIS

Diagnosis is based on a complete physical exam and the interpretation of radiographs of the relevant joints. If on physical exam there is no clinical evidence of arthritis ie reduced range of motion in a joint, then other causes of reduced exercise tolerance can be worked up. For example a previous episode of overheating or heartworm disease can present with reluctance to work, unable to keep up on big days, stiffness etc.

## TREATING MY DOGS OSTEOARTHRITIS

1. Rest alone.
2. Reduced working time.
3. Rest and medication.
4. Surgery.
5. Medication.

Treatment could be just rest alone, eg. if an acute lameness is given time to recover then the dog may make a full recovery without developing arthritis.

If not rested and not diagnosed then crippling arthritis may develop and prevent the dog from living out it's life as a useful working companion.

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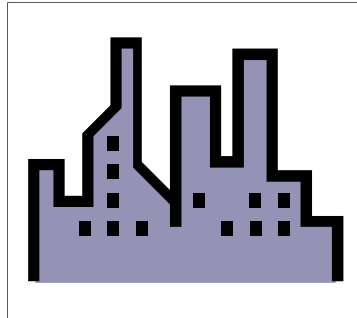
In recent years, research has produced products called disease-modifying agents, which appear to be quite beneficial in reducing the effects of osteoarthritis. These agents are called Glucosamines and Chondroitin Sulphate.

If you suspect arthritis in your dog or it has an accident ie being stood on by a cow, leg caught in the sheep yard fence, call your local veterinarian and discuss all the options and possibilities.

*“To catch the reader's attention, place an interesting sentence or quote from the story here.”*

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## INSIDE STORY HEADLINE



Caption describing picture or graphic.

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## INSIDE STORY HEADLINE

This story can fit 100-150 words.

The subject matter that appears in newsletters is virtually endless. You can include stories that focus on current technologies or innovations in your field.

You may also want to note business or economic trends, or make predictions for your customers or clients.

If the newsletter is distributed internally, you might comment upon new procedures or improvements to the business. Sales figures or earnings will show how your business is growing.

Some newsletters include a column that is updated every issue, for instance, an advice column, a book review, a letter from the president, or an editorial. You can also profile new employees or top customers or vendors.

*“To catch the reader's attention, place an interesting sentence or quote from the story here.”*

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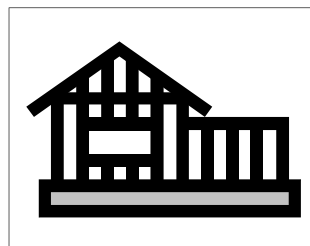
This story can fit 75-125 words.

Selecting pictures or graphics is an important part of adding content to your newsletter.

Think about your article and ask yourself if the picture supports or enhances the message you're trying to convey. Avoid selecting images that appear to be out of context.

Microsoft Publisher includes thousands of clip art images from which you can choose and import into your newsletter. There are also several tools you can use to draw shapes and symbols.

Once you have chosen an image, place it close to the article. Be sure to place the caption of the image near the image.



Caption describing picture or graphic.

## Townsville Veterinary Clinic

And  
North Queensland Specialist Equine  
Service  
32-34 Anne st Aitkenvale QLD 4814

We're on the Web!  
example.microsoft.com

The practice employs six veterinarians – Dr. Bruce Platt, Dr. Ben Lodge, Dr. Brad Darling, Dr. Belinda Leake, Dr. Erica Wyles and Dr. Caroline Spelha. Bruce, Ben and Brad are dedicated full time equine vets. Brad is currently the only full time registered specialist in equine surgery in Queensland. This means the Townsville Veterinary Clinic can boast 7 days a week access to a specialist should your horse require it.



This would be a good place to insert a short paragraph about your organization. It might include the purpose of the organization, its mission, founding date, and a brief history. You could also include a brief list of the types of products, services, or programs your organization offers, the geographic area covered (for example, western U.S. or European markets), and a profile of the types of customers or members served.

It would also be useful to include a contact name for readers who want more information about the organization.

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