



Always consult with a veterinarian that you feel comfortable with before diagnosing or treating any disease on your own. This information is for reference only.

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Osteochondritis Dissecans

Issue Description

Osteochondritis dissecans (OCD) is a hereditary disease that occurs early in the development of some dogs, and less often in horses and cats. The condition is characterized by cracks and flaps in articular cartilage, which cause inflammation, joint instability, pain, lameness, and degenerative joint disease.

Other Names

OCD

Causes

Most often the cause is rapid bone development, so OCD is usually found in puppies between four and eight months old. However, it can occasionally be found in older dogs, as well as smaller breeds. It affects male dogs about five times more often than females.

Symptoms

The symptoms are lameness in the affected limb. Some dogs have a barely noticeable limp and others are unable to bear any weight on the leg. The lameness tends to worsen after periods of exercise and improves after rest. Seventy four percent of the cases of OCD occur in the shoulder joint, 11% in the elbow, and 4% in the hock. When it affects the front shoulder, a shortened forelimb stride may be noted due to reluctance to flex and extend the shoulder joint. Occasionally, the disease will affect both limbs simultaneously and the dog may be reluctant to move.

Diagnosis

The problem develops in puppyhood although often subclinically, and there may be pain or stiffness, discomfort on extension, or other compensating characteristics.

Diagnosis generally depends on X-ray's, arthroscopy, or MRI scans. While cases of OCD of the stifle go undetected and heal spontaneously, others are exhibited in acute lameness. Surgery is recommended once the animal has been deemed lame.

Osteochondritis dissecans is difficult to diagnose clinically as the animal may only exhibit an unusual gait. Consequently, OCD may be masked by, or misdiagnosed as, other skeletal and joint conditions such as hip dysplasia.

Treatments

Treatment of affected joints may be surgical or conservative. The optimum treatment for some joints remains controversial.

Conservative treatment is usually reserved for animals with no or minimal clinical signs or where there is moderate to severe degenerative joint disease.

Surgical treatment consists of removal of the cartilage flap and /or joint pieces floating in the joint.

Dog Breeds Prone to Osteochondritis dissecans (OCD):

- Australian Cattle Dog
- Basset Hound
- Chesapeake Bay Retriever
- German Shorthaired Pointer
- Giant Schnauzer
- Great Dane
- Great Pyrenees
- Irish Setter
- Irish Wolfhound
- Kuvasz
- Labrador Retriever
- Mastiff
- Newfoundland
- Saint Bernard

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