



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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Spondylosis

Issue Description

This condition is best known as spondylosis deformans. There is no spinal cord compression, but the spine is immobilized in that location. If the condition continues to spread, there may be several such bridges, "welding" a series of vertebrae into an inflexible backbone.

Other Names

Spondylosis deformans

Causes

Generally thought to be hereditary.

Symptoms

When the space between two adjacent vertebrae narrows, compression of a nerve root emerging from the spinal cord may result in radiculopathy (sensory and motor system disturbances, such as severe pain in the neck, shoulder, arm, back, and/or leg, accompanied by muscle weakness). Less commonly, direct pressure on the spinal cord (typically in the cervical spine) may result in global weakness, gait dysfunction, loss of balance, and loss of bowel and/or bladder control.

Diagnosis

Often, spondylosis will be discovered on radiographs incidentally while the vet is looking for something else, such as a cause for lameness. In some of these cases, he may be tempted to make his diagnosis right then, and not to look further for the actual main cause, which may include HD, osteochondrosis in other joints, tumors, and others. Osteoarthritis of the spine (inflammation of the joints between vertebrae) is not the same disorder, nor is true spondylitis (an inflammation of the vertebrae themselves, brought on by either trauma or infection). Remember that "-itis" means inflammation, and spondylosis deformans is a non-inflammatory degenerative disease.

Treatment

Treatment for spondylosis deformans is often unnecessary as the pain can be minimal and the disease rarely causes compression of the spinal cord. Supportive care may include one or more of the following:

- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) may be used in pets that are painful. All drugs have potential side effects; however, the newer NSAIDs seem to have less side effects than aspirin in animals.
- Surgical treatment to remove the spurs if spinal cord compression is evident based on the myelogram.

Prognosis

Many affected dogs live satisfactory lives, though somewhat limited in flexibility and range of motion. Fortunately, by the time spondylosis deformans becomes noticeable in clinical signs, the dog may be considered "retired" from his duties of running around, jumping, and doing the other things expected of a youngster. In some individuals, it will get worse suddenly rather than continue in a gradual worsening. Possibly, trauma may bring fracture of the bridge created in the development of spondylosis, which crack may spread to the arch and body, thus pinching the cord.

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