



Arthritis and your Pet

As our pets age they may suffer from arthritis. It can be a painful condition and is usually noticeable as a stiff gait first thing in the morning (often worse in cold weather), which improves with a bit of exercise.

Arthritis describes inflammation in a joint and may be attributable to many factors. It is generally a progressive condition, but we can do a great deal to slow the course of the disease and make your pet a lot more comfortable for the rest of his/her days.

It is very important to keep your pet's weight under control. Carrying around extra baggage is a huge burden on the joints and lightening their load will help them to function better and cut down on their pain.

Ensuring that your pet eats good quality food with optimal amounts of omega 3 fatty acids, which are natural anti-inflammatories, helps them to maintain a good weight and joint health. Omega 3's are found in flax oil and cold water fish, and can be added to your pet's food - 1 teaspoon of flax oil per day for a cat and little dog, 2 teaspoons for a 15 – 30 kg dog and 3 teaspoons for any bigger dog. Horses and cattle take 4 teaspoons per 100 kg. Just making this change can make a noticeable difference.

Next on the list and clinically proven to help are chondroprotective (joint protecting) agents called polysulphated glucosaminoglycans (P-Gags). These are naturally occurring substances found in green lipped mussel extract, shark cartilage and other sources. There are many supplements available but as with all supplements it is important to remember that they aren't all created equal, some work better than others and may be more appropriate for your animal than others. There is also an injectable form of P-gags that can be used alone or in conjunction with the above, it too can work wonders.

Massage of the tight muscles trying to compensate for the pain is very helpful as these are frequently tired and sore. Gentle massage is loved by most animals and helps to stimulate circulation.

Gentle, low impact Exercise, such as swimming or walks on the beach, is of vital importance to help keep supporting muscles strong and contribute to general well-being.

In addition to all of these are alternative and complementary therapy options such as homeopathy and herbal medicine, acupuncture, the Neurological Integration System (NIS) and hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy as well as musculo-skeletal therapies such as chiropractics and Bowen therapy which have proven to be very valuable aids. For optimal results these are best used by an experienced practitioner working in conjunction with your vet to tailor make a program to suit your animal's needs.

When none of these changes are making enough of a difference we make use of painkillers such as Non Steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, which may occasionally have side effects, to ease pain.

With a comprehensive treatment plan, a great deal of quality can be added to your pet's life.