



HELPING OLD DOGS WITH ARTHRITIS and JOINT PAIN

One of the hardest things as a pet owner is watching an old, arthritic dog struggling to get up and get moving after lying down for a while and having to help them get up and down stairs. And worse, the ritual of getting up slowly and painfully is played several times daily, making it even harder for us to bear.

Arthritis results as the cartilage surface of joints (knees, hips, etc) gets thinner and the cartilage cells die. These dying cells release enzymes that cause inflammation of the joint, which creates pain. As the cartilage thins, the bone that lies beneath the cartilage may deteriorate. In some cases, the formation of small deposits of bone in the joints can add significantly to pain and discomfort. By this point, limping and /or continuous pain and discomfort are a way of life for these poor pets. Fortunately, we have a variety of ways to help your pet. A combination of practices can offer great benefits to them.

Just as with people, we have a variety of effective pain relievers for pets. The most commonly prescribed medications for pets (and people, too) are called NSAIDs ~ Non-Steroid Anti-Inflammatory Drugs. While they can be invaluable, be aware that they come with precautions for pets *and* people. Potential liver and kidney problems can occur, so blood work is required periodically.

There are several NSAIDs for both dogs and cats, and all are by prescription only. Because we are not full-service, we do not prescribe these medications at Carolina Value Pet Care. Still, NSAIDs have helped millions of dogs lead more comfortable lives. You may recognize some of these medications: Rimadyl (Carprofen ~ also available as a generic), Deramaxx (Deracoxib), Previcox (Firocoxib), Metacam (Meloxicam ~ available for Cats, too), and EtoGesic (Etodolac). Galliprant (Grapiprant) is shown to be safer than other NSAIDs as it is less likely to cause intestinal, liver, or kidney problems.

An injectable medication Adequan has proven to be highly effective with very few side-effects. It requires 6 injections over the first 3 weeks, then monthly injections.

The newest medication available for dogs is Librela, a once-a-month injection. The safety of Librela makes it a great addition to prescription arthritis products since it is not processed by the liver or kidneys. It is an antibody that blocks pain caused by arthritis. Cats can also suffer from arthritis, and Solensia is a once-a-month injection that has proven pain relief.

Prescription pain medications such as Tramadol, Gabapentin, and Amantadine may not relieve inflammation, but they may help with pain and discomfort.

Besides prescription medications, there are several non-prescription ways to help an arthritic pet.

MOVOFLEX Advanced: One of my favorite recommendations is Movoflex, a sugar-free and gluten-free chewable tablet that blends 6 unique ingredients to support joint mobility, flexibility, and overall joint health. While it may take a few weeks to see visible improvement, MOVOFLEX has proven to be highly effective, even in dogs that are severely arthritic. It is available at Carolina Value Pet Care, and I highly encourage trying it. A container provides a 2-month supply ... and it comes with a money-back guarantee.

CBD / CBDA is the most recent addition to our toolkit to help dogs and cats with joint inflammation and pain. Understand that CBD is not hallucinogenic, so your pet won't get high. And it has a multitude of other potential health benefits. ElleVet is the only CBD product that is clinically proven to help with arthritis. Because many dogs do not respond to CBD, but will respond to CBDA, ElleVet's products are a 50-50 mix of CBD and CBDA. Unlike NSAIDs, we do not see CBD affecting the liver or kidneys, making it a very safe choice. We do have ElleVet CBD/CBDA available at CVPC. Glucosamine + Chondroitin + MSM may help dogs and cats by providing nutritional support to protect the cartilage and slowing down the enzymes that break down cartilage. Cosequin and Dasuquin are 2 options in veterinary glucosamine products. We have heard from multiple dog owners that Movoflex works noticeably better than Glucosamine. Omega-3 Fatty Acids in the form of Fish Oils: May be helpful when given at high doses. The minimum dose is 60mg to 75mg per pound of body weight ... given daily. To properly dose, look at the label on the bottle and combine (add) the mg of EPA+DHA. Ex: A 50 lb dog would need ~3000mg - 4000mg of combined EPA + DHA each day.

Weight Loss: If your pet is overweight, please read my handout entitled "How To Help Your Dog and Cat Lose Weight" for my thoughts, ideas and simple strategies for shedding unwanted pounds from your pet. Losing extra weight can take an enormous burden off the painful, creaky joints of older pets, or those dogs that have had joint injuries.

Stem Cells & PEMF: Two newer procedures that I encourage pet owners to consider are: 1) Stem Cell Therapy and 2) PEMF treatment. Adult (not embryonic or fetal) Stem Cell Therapy uses cells extracted from a pet's own fat tissue. This very effective therapy can actually be far more affordable (and less invasive and less painful) than joint replacement surgery. PEMF (Pulsed ElectroMagnetic Field Therapy) is a totally painless method of directing powerful, pulsed energy waves towards damaged areas of the body. Great results have been seen in pets, horses and people.

Physical therapy can be extremely beneficial. There are veterinarians who offer physical therapy/rehab for those patients that have had bone and joint surgery, as well as for older, arthritic pets. Acupuncture and/or Massage Therapy have proven to be beneficial for many pets. Laser therapy for arthritis is also available. While joint replacement surgery may be an option with many pets, but it can be very expensive, with the need for rehabilitation.

A very simple and practical idea is to provide your arthritic pet with a well-padded bed. And heated pet beds can be even more helpful and comfortable, especially in the winter months. Since slick floors and surfaces can be a real challenge for arthritic pets, use non-skid rugs and carpets. Stairs can be really tricky as well, so building a ramp (if practical), putting carpet on the stairs, or even carrying your old friend up and down steps can help considerably.

There are so-called 'natural' (whatever that means ... don't be fooled by this marketing buzzword !) pain relief medications on the market. In general, they are useless, but if you have good results with a product, let us know.

You have lots of choices to consider and I believe it's beneficial to combine strategies for even better results. Give your old dog or cat the relief from pain that she/he deserves!