Cover Photo: Darbi after his x-rays, feeling a little bit tired and sleepy

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Welcome to my winter edition and new look “Pawfect Balance” e-zine. Once again it has been a busy 3 months. I visited TGO headquarters and had a great time with Lisa, Ian and the Goldies. While we were down there, my hubby and I had Darbi x-rayed as he had been pulling up lame and stiff after exercise.

The x-rays showed that Darbi suffers from Moderate Arthritis in both his front legs. Both elbows and wrists, I had suspected this was a possible scenario and outcome. Needless to say I was very upset for Darbi, so now it’s a matter of managing his arthritis and pain it can cause.

This required a lot of research as to what is available in addition to my profession as a Canine Myofunctional Therapist. I remembered I had touched on the subject of arthritis in an earlier issue but found I can now pass on some of the information I have gathered along the way.

This issue covers signs and symptoms, an overview of some treatments available and a short note on exercise. My next issue will be more in-depth on exercise, and also look at supplements and medications for pain relief. There are so many different types of supplements and medications, I have not had a chance to look at them all. Next issue will cover more information.

I’d like to dedicate this issue to all those professionals and volunteers that help our canine companions. A special thanks to Ian and my hubby who built a fold up ramp for Darbi for him to use to get into and out of the car.

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Signs and symptoms of Arthritis

My research has discovered that it is estimated from studies that as many as one in five dogs suffer arthritis as they get older. As dogs age they slow down and we may think this is due to their seniority. The truth is they may have joint pain, due to arthritis which can be debilitating for our fur kids. Unfortunately dogs are stoic animals and they may try to hide their pain and discomfort. My exploration of the subject of arthritis suggests we need to look for signs and symptoms of arthritis. These can be identified easier after any vigorous exercise or extra-long walks or longer rest periods.

Signs can be hard to see at times, from the reading I have done, they can be identified by one or more of the following:

- Lameness or stiffness.
- A slower than normal gait.
- Hard to rise after a rest, especially on tiles and timber floors.
- Licking of joints.
- Pain, which may cause your dog to vocalise or lick your hand.
- Swelling or heat may be identified in the joints.

There are other symptoms, however if you see the above, on several occasions, you may want to get advice from your vet.

There are five types of arthritis in dogs, the most common is apparently osteoarthritis also known as Degenerative Joint Disease, caused by friction between the bones due to cartilage damage. From what I have read, bone spurs can develop and pure breed dogs have a higher occurrence of Degenerative Joint Disease.

The other common type of arthritis is inflammatory joint disease which can be caused by infection, or inherited in the particular blood line.

On a much rarer scale there is bleeding of the joints known as metabolic, Crystalloid and neoplastic joint cancer.

My reading has unfortunately identified that there are many causes of arthritis in dogs, with some of the more common causes including cartilage damage, poor diet previous injuries/trauma, infection of the joints, age, obesity and diabetes. There are many other known but less common factors and these may include tick-borne disease, fungus, bacteria and Cushing's disease.
Treatments available for Arthritis

If you suspect your pet may have arthritis, take him to the vet. Your vet will assess your dog for arthritis with a physical examination looking for signs such as grinding of the joints, abnormal bone formation in the joints, pain, heat, tenderness, swelling, a poor ROM (Range of motion) and any muscle atrophy (Muscle wastage).

If your vet suspects arthritis they may suggest an x-ray of the joints. Your dog will be put under a general anaesthetic for this to prevent your fur kid moving whilst being x-rayed. Joint fluid could be tested to see if the arthritis is degenerative or inflammatory.

If your dog tests positive for arthritis, treatment will be a complete lifestyle change. Proper exercise and diet will determine your dog’s quality of life. In the short term your vet may prescribe NSAIDS (Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) to reduce pain and swelling. Cortisone may also be used to reduce swelling. Glycosaminoglycans could be used to reduce the breakdown of cartilage or Visco-supplementation via a gel type injection. Of late stem cell therapy is proving to be a positive treatment in pain relief and joint repair.

Physiotherapy, massage therapy, laser and chiropractic therapy benefit dogs by reducing pain, decrease any scar tissue and improve mobility. Hydrotherapy using underwater treadmills put less pressure on the joints and ligaments increasing mobility for your dog. Acupuncture, ultrasound and magnetic therapy have also been used to treat arthritis in dogs. In some cases of chronic arthritis surgery may be required.

Source: petMD and vetwest

Exercise for dogs with arthritis

From what I’ve read, keeping your dog lean and providing short walks and low impact exercise will assist your dog in maintaining a good life. We have had a ramp made for our dog Darbi to assist him getting into and out of the car. Low impact exercise such as swimming will also greatly benefit your fur kid.

Source: www.handsonpaws.com.au
Our Fees

Hands on Paws, provides Canine Myofunctional Therapy to the Sunshine Coast. Covering Caloundra in the south To Noosa in the north, and west to Landsborough for a standard set fee.

45 Minutes $45
60 Minutes $60

Outside of these areas services are provided at the standard fee, plus a fuel and travel expense to be negotiated at the time of booking.

Bookings:

Please call Sarah on 0431 948 208 to make an appointment

*Please leave a message if I don’t answer I may be treating a patient.*

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