

OSTEOCHONDRITIS DISSECANS OF THE SHOULDER FACT SHEET



NAME

WEIGHT

DATE

NEXT VISIT

DESCRIPTION

Osteochondrosis is a disruption of the process in which cartilage turns into bone, leaving a thickened patch of cartilage at the joint surface.

Osteochondritis dissecans can occur in the shoulder when weak, abnormal cartilage detaches from the bone, leaving fragments in the joint space.

It usually affects large-breed dogs during growth, with the first clinical signs appearing between 5 and 7 months of age.



NORMAL SHOULDER

- A healthy shoulder joint has a smooth, thin cartilage.
- There are no cartilage fragments in the joint space.
- A normal joint structure facilitates normal joint function without clinical signs of pain.



OSTEOCHONDRITIS DISSECANS OF THE SHOULDER

- In cases of osteochondritis, a thickened patch of cartilage becomes weak and damaged.
- The cartilage surface develops cracks, and a flap of cartilage may detach and float in the joint space.
- This disease may lead to the development of osteoarthritis.

OSTEOCHONDRITIS DISSECANS OF THE SHOULDER

CLINICAL SIGNS

- Chronic or acute forelimb lameness that gets worse with exercise.
- The dog is stiffer after periods of rest.
- Walking may seem forced; the dog takes shortened steps.
- Sometimes lameness appears after trauma.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Non-surgical management

- **Weight control** is vital as allowing the dog to become overweight will accelerate the onset and progression of osteoarthritis.
- **Anti-inflammatory drugs** are used to reduce pain and inflammation in the joint, thereby improving the dog's quality of life.
- **Dietary supplements** may be added for different purposes. Glucosamine with chondroitin sulphate supports the joint cartilage. Omega-3 fatty acids are used for their anti-inflammatory properties.
- **Controlled exercise** limits pain and helps to strengthen the surrounding muscles. Exercise should be limited until the lameness improves and then increased in a controlled manner.

Conservative treatment may be beneficial for some dogs with this disease, but long-term resolution of lameness usually requires surgery.

Surgical intervention

The objectives of surgery are to:

- Remove the loose cartilage fragments.
- Stimulate repair of the joint cartilage to slow down the degenerative process.

If surgery is recommended, it should be performed as soon as possible to reduce the risk of osteoarthritis.



TIPS FOR THE OWNER

- Daily physiotherapy, including gentle, short exercises – as directed by your veterinarian – is beneficial for your dog as it will improve the mobility of the affected limb.
- Keeping your dog's weight under control with an appropriate high-quality diet and calorie restriction is essential to maintaining their joint health and general well-being.
- You can help your dog by using a harness that provides them with support and assistance on walks.
- Environmental modifications, such as a comfortable bed to sleep on, a mat on slippery floors and a ramp or steps to get into the car, will make daily activities easier for your dog.
- Don't forget to use medical treatment to reduce pain and inflammation, and to improve your dog's quality of life.

Please consult with your veterinarian for confirmation of any diagnosis or treatment.

© 2023 Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health Canada Inc.