UNUNITED ANCONEAL PROCESS FACT SHEET

NAME

WEIGHT

DATE

NEXT VISIT

DESCRIPTION

The anconeal process is a small piece of bone that forms part of the upper rim of the elbow joint socket. It needs to unite with the longer bone of the lower leg during growth, which is complete at around 4 to 5 months of age.

When this does not occur, the anconeal process remains loose in the joint and is only fixed to the leg bone by fibrous tissue. It causes cartilage thickening, cracks and degeneration.

This process usually affects large-breed dogs. The clinical signs appear between 6 and 12 months of age and it often occurs in both of the dog's elbows.

NORMAL ELBOW

- A healthy elbow joint has a smooth, thin cartilage.
- The anconeal process is attached.
- A normal joint structure facilitates normal joint function without clinical signs of pain.

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- When the union of the anconeal process to the leg bone does not occur, the cartilage becomes thickened and cracks. The unattached part of the bone can be easily observed.

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CLINICAL SIGNS

- Intermittent lameness in one or both of the forelimbs, which worsens with exercise.
- The dog presents with stiff joints in the morning and after rest, and with reduced range of motion in the elbow.
- Dogs may develop chronic lameness due to the development of osteoarthritis.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Treatment will depend on the age of the dog and the severity of the disease.

Non-surgical management

- **Weight control** is vital as allowing the dog to become overweight will accelerate the onset and progression of osteoarthritis.
- **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.
- **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.

Surgical intervention

- **Anconeal process removal:** This is used to help alleviate pain but will not prevent osteoarthritis from developing.
- **Ulnar osteotomy:** This technique aims to facilitate union of the anconeal process and the ulna (leg bone). The goal is to align the anconeal process and the leg bone.
- **Internal attachment of the anconeal process and ulnar osteotomy:** The anconeal process is attached to the leg bone and an ulnar osteotomy is then performed. This is the most effective technique, however, it can only be performed if the fragment needing attachment has a normal structure, and when there is only minimal degenerative damage to the joint.

Surgical intervention is usually required to successfully treat the disease. Your veterinarian will recommend the most suitable option for your dog.

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.