

Arthritis

Arthritis, or degenerative joint disease, has been reported in over 20% of adult dogs. There are many potential causes for arthritis. The most commonly affected joints include the hips, stifles (knees), elbows, carpi (wrists), and the spine. Treatments for arthritis are numerous. Frequently, medical therapies to relieve pain and inflammation are indicated. Multiple drugs are available today for the treatment of arthritis, encompassing a wide range of efficacy and cost. It is important to NEVER give pets human drugs such as aspirin, Tylenol (acetaminophen), Advil (ibuprofen) or Aleve (naproxen sodium) without a doctor recommendation. These drugs are toxic to pets in very small amounts, and may severely affect liver, kidney, and gastrointestinal tract function.

NSAIDs (NON-STEROIDAL ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DRUGS)

A commonly utilized drug in this category is Rimadyl (carprofen). It works to relieve inflammation and blocks the pain pathways in the body, yet it is sparing of the stomach lining. It may have side effects, which include liver and stomach conditions. Your veterinarian will require that blood testing be done prior to placing an animal on the drug long-term to ensure that risks are minimized. Cost: \$60.00–80.00/ 60 tablets, about \$0.85 to \$2.30 per day. Another frequently used NSAID drug is Metacam (meloxicam). This drug is very similar to Rimadyl in its beneficial actions and possible side effects. Bloodwork is also required for long-term use. Metacam has the advantage of being administered ONCE daily. It comes in a palatable liquid form. Cost: \$40.00/ 30 cc's, about \$1.00 to \$2.00 per day.

CARTILAGE ENHANCERS / NUTRACEUTICALS

Two drugs commonly used in this category are Cosequin (oral form) and Adequan (injectable form). These drugs work by providing the basic cellular materials necessary for the body to regenerate joint fluid, and to slow the breakdown of joint cartilage. Ideally, they will also prevent further damage from occurring. Cost: Cosequin: \$70.00/ 120–180 tablets, depending on strength, approximately \$1.20 to \$1.65 per day. Adequan: \$37.00–70.00/ injection, based on weight, weekly to monthly.

STEROIDS

Two metabolic steroid drugs often used in animals include prednisone (oral form) and triamcinalone (injectable form). Steroids work by disrupting the pain pathways and relieving inflammation. They are approximately 5-20 times stronger than NSAIDs. They mask pain, rather than cure it. Steroids must NOT be used concurrently with NSAIDs due to the increased risk of gastrointestinal problems. Steroids have side effects, especially with long-term use, which may include increased appetite, drinking, frequency of urination, and immune suppression. Cost: Prednisone: \$20.00–35.00/60 tablets, approximately \$0.30 to 0.85 per day. Triamcinalone: \$37.00/ injection, every 6-8 weeks as indicated.

NEW/ ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

Alternative methods of treatment may include acupuncture, herbal supplements, dietary therapies, and physical therapy. Please speak with your veterinarian if you are interested in pursuing these options.

EXERCISE AND ACTIVITY

Regarding exercise, slow walks are generally recommended for arthritic animals in order to maintain muscle mass if the animal is not too painful. Strenuous exercise and non-consistent activity should be avoided. Pay attention to indicators of pain in your animal - difficulty rising, trouble walking or collapse, heavy panting or fever - and do not go beyond what your pet can tolerate comfortably. Also, keep your pet warm in colder weather, which tends to exacerbate arthritis pain. Provide your animal with well-padded surfaces and bedding to minimize discomfort.

Please speak with a veterinarian regarding your animal and which drugs would be most appropriate in treating arthritis pain. With proper care and medical therapies, your pet can be maintained as comfortably as possible. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Indian Tree staff.

