

*Ask the Physiotherapist?*

## **Osteochondrosis (OCD)**

### **Follow-up article to the one regarding OCD (OSTEOCHONDROSIS) in *Fuglehunden* No 5-2002**

#### **Treatment and forms of therapy**

Various treatment follow-ups and forms of therapy can be used and are listed below, points 1 – 8. The choice of method will depend on the severity of symptoms, i.e. how affected the dog is.

If a diagnosis of OCD is made, the consultation at the vets, including the combination of x-ray and clinical findings, will provide an overview of the situation and indicate which method of treatment should be applied in order to obtain, and result in, as best a treatment result as possible with an absence of symptoms and pain in the future for that specific canine patient.

#### **Various measures with respect to treating OCD:**

1. Surgery
2. Pain alleviation treatment - medication
3. Conservative treatment – physiotherapy, various forms of physiotherapy
4. Diet – dog food changes
5. Dietary supplements - regenerative causing new growth and also inflammation reduction treatment
6. Chiropractics
7. Homeopathy
8. Acupuncture

#### **Surgery**

In cases of classic OCD, i.e. ones where there is loosening of the cartilage in the shoulder, elbow, knee or hock joint respectively, the usual recommendation is an operation to remove the loose bits as soon as a diagnosis has been made if the loose bits impede good play in the joint.

In cases of changes to elbow joints for example, it is often difficult to make a satisfactory diagnosis. Often the only things present are fractures in their formative stages or small changes that cannot be operated on or treated surgically.

For these cases and those concerning older dogs with arthrosis (wear and tear rheumatism) conservative treatment is called for. This means rest for 2-3 weeks during the acute limping phase, followed by gradual rehabilitation training, possibly in combination with pain alleviation agents.

It is important to build up again and through trial and error maintain the musculature, as well as provide even and regular, though gradually increasing, amounts of activity within the dog's tolerance limits and under the pain threshold in order to sustain the functionality of the joint.

#### **Prognosis**

Most dogs with loose pieces of cartilage in their shoulder joints no longer limp after surgery involving the removal of the piece of cartilage that is loose in the joint.

The prognosis for the elbow joint is poorer. Loose coronoid process usually leads to bad arthrosis. Studies show that approx. 50% of dogs limp for periods for the rest of their lives.

If the coronoid process is only subject to fracture formation and the arthrosis is mild then most dogs will remain no longer limp when they stop growing.

OCD on the upper leg bone's lower joint ball (with condyl humerus) osteochondrosis dissecans have a somewhat better prognosis than those with loose coronoid process. From experience we can say that approx. 70% of operated dogs will no longer limp.

Loose anconeus process (classic elbow joint dysplasia) results in the reduced stability of the joint and the development of severe arthrosis. Limping will be evident.

When it comes to OCD in the knee joint the prognosis is better, while dogs who suffer from OCD in the hock joint will often be plagued by arthrosis and limp for longer periods for the rest of their lives.

### **Treatment with medication**

Some conditions plague dogs so much that they have to take pain-alleviating medication for shorter or longer periods. Some dogs have to take painkillers for the rest of their lives.

NSAIDS are the preparations that are often chosen, these are anti-inflammatory preparations that both alleviate pain and irritation or inflammation in the tissue in and around the joint.

### **Conservative treatment**

Conservative treatments cover non-operative methods, i.e. non-surgical methods such as physiotherapy, chiropractics, medication treatment, possibly dietary supplements, homeopathy, acupuncture and others.

With the aid of these methods one tries to influence the symptoms and condition, maintain, prevent and provide advice, information and guidance regarding the relevant issue.

Various disciplines have their own methods and approaches to this type of issue – these are often complementary. Combining the knowledge of these practitioners often results in good results vis-à-vis treatment. Interdisciplinary co-operation will provide the canine patient with better and broader treatment alternatives. Combinations of various forms of therapy will often be necessary to achieve the desired result vis-à-vis pain and day-to-day freedom from symptoms for the canine patient. In this context physiotherapy can provide many different approaches and methods.

By way of example I could mention here heat or cold treatment, laser treatment, ultrasound treatment, scanlab, interference, tens treatment, acupuncture treatment, Altens, rebox treatment, Radial Extracorporeal Shock Wave therapy (Swiss Dolor Cast Vet.).

What all of these methods have in common is their goal of making the dog pain free and alleviating the negative condition of the tissue in the joint or in the tissue surrounding the joint. This in turn improves functionality, i.e. the dog can do more and after a while will gradually be able to tolerate greater loads.

For particular reasons I want to look more closely at and highlight one of the treatment methods mentioned above called Radial Extracorporeal Shock Wave Therapy, Swiss Dolor Cast Vet.

In the USA and Canada a number of veterinarians have mixed veterinary practices that combine both horses and small animals, i.e. dogs and cats. In this context the first dogs with degenerative joint disorders and also calcification in tendon tissue and tendons have actually been successfully treated with the aid of Swiss Dolor Cast Vet, using the Extracorporeal Shock Wave Therapy method.

A number of very surprising and positive treatment results vis-à-vis OCD, hip joint dysplasia, and tendon problems in dogs, have been reported by clinics. This treatment method is relatively new to Norway and has been used here for approx. 3 years now. The treatment has so far been applied and used by doctors and vets.

Physiotherapists are now starting to use this method of treatment when it comes to following up painful conditions and with respect to the rehabilitation of muscle, tendons and joint disorders.

Prior to treatment a thorough clinical examination is required which includes examining and obtaining an account of the relevant history of illness as well as any clinical findings relating to the dog's problem.

Below is a list of some of the orthopaedic conditions that dogs suffer from and which appear to be suitable for Swiss Dolor Cast Vet treatment:

- OCD
- Osteoarthritis in the hips, elbows, knees and shoulders
- Hip joint dysplasia
- Calcified tendonitis
- Osteopathia
- Fractures
- Legg-Calve-Perthes disease

It would appear that the first treatment result statistics indicate positive results vis-à-vis this method, Extracorporeal Shock Wave Therapy Vet.

It would appear that the clinical findings and research statistics now indicate that a 6 month follow-up study suggests that the therapeutical effects are long-term and that it will in the future be a cheaper and more positive alternative treatment compared to the pharmaceutical treatment of these conditions.

In practice this means that it might be wise to have an OCD disorder in a joint diagnosed, evaluated and examined vis-à-vis the clinical problem with respect to this method in order to be able to provide a dog with a pain free life in cases where an OCD condition cannot be operated on or an operation will have no positive effect.

In practice this also means that those joints listed above that have been diagnosed as suffering from OCD and which are unsuitable for operations could possibly benefit from this form of treatment. I believe this is especially true for cases of dogs with OCD in the elbow joint.

The method involves, as inferred by its name, extracorporeal (outside the dog's body) shock wave therapy in which one sees a dissolving or crushing effect on the loose pieces of cartilage or calcification in the joint and joint ends, and possibly tendon tissue.

### **Diet**

It has been shown that a number of types of dog food and an incorrect choice of dog food or type of dog food can make a dog predisposed to an OCD condition and participate in its development.

It would therefore be right for dog owners to consult their vets or possibly other professional who can provide advice about choosing the right type of dog food for their dog so that one doesn't provoke the occurrence of a negative disorder in one joint or more due to the incorrect choice of dog food for puppies or young dogs.

I think I would advise all dog owners to get such an evaluation early on in a dog's life so that afterwards one doesn't regret it – prevention is better than cure.

### **Dietary supplements**

I contributed an article about dietary supplements for dogs in connection with muscle and joint disorders, wear and tear changes, and joint pain to *Fuglehunden* no 3-2002.

Please refer to this article. I would also like to point out that vets, physiotherapists and chiropractors recommend dietary supplements for muscle and joint disorders since these alleviate both pain and inflammation. They have also been shown to regenerate tissue, i.e. they are able to rebuild damaged cartilage and other damaged tissue such as joint cups, ligaments, tendon tissue, the tendons that fix muscles, and more.

The latest discussions within research milieus regarding muscle and joint disorders have involved people asking whether ordinary medications such as NSAIDS actually in the long run contribute to further damage and degeneration of joint cartilage.

This is worth bearing in mind when it comes to a diagnosis such as this (OCD) and also with respect to the fact that this medication is used in many other different contexts vis-à-vis various diagnoses dogs receive.

Dietary supplements that we know have a positive effect on joint, muscle, and tendon disorders include, for example, glucosamine or glucosamine sulphate. For example, the Canine Cortaflex product series, which is produced by Equine America in the USA, contains this substance. The products in this series are 100% natural products – pure natural products without artificial additives.

Furthermore, we have research results that show that fatty acids such as Omega 3, 6, and 9 together in combination with antioxidants (vitamins and minerals) have an inflammation alleviating affect and a harmonising effect vis-à-vis tissue chemistry or the tissue environment in muscles, tendons and joints.

Furthermore, the Aloe Vera plant has proven to have both pain and inflammation alleviating effects. Aloe Vera can be found as a juice or juice jelly and can be added to dog food.

Other dietary supplements that can and should be mentioned include Noni, which is extracted from flowering *Morinda Citrifolia* bushes, i.e. the fruit of this plant is used to produce Noni juice. Cases of joint pain and inflammation in joints have been reported in which Noni juice has had a positive effect in the form of reduced joint pain and reduced inflammation. An article about Noni – Polynesian Fruit Juice, written by journalist Gro Henriksen, "A pet miracle from paradise?" appeared in *Hundesport* no. 3-2002.

Those interested in this can and should contact either NKK or the journalist, Gro Henriksen, directly if they require further information or want to read this article.

Furthermore, one can find information about Noni or Morinda Citrifolia and scientific research relating to this field by searching using the keywords: Pub Med, Med Line.

### **Brief discussion of points 6-8**

- Chiropractics
- Homeopathy
- Acupuncture

When it comes to a diagnosis of OCD a chiropractic evaluation of the joint involved may sometimes be indicated, other times an evaluation will have to be made of an adjoining joint and its functionality or dysfunctionality.

In cases of OCD, homeopathy can help with the level of pain experienced and irritation in and around the joint. Homeopathy focuses on symptoms and the condition – not on the diagnosis.

Acupuncture is suitable for pain alleviation and reducing inflammation of the tissue in cases of OCD.

This article shows that there are many different approaches when it comes to treating a diagnosis of OCD. I hope that it has shed both light on the subject and provides dog owners with hope as far as healing is concerned should one actually have been told that one's dog has OCD.

If you have a dog with this type of problem, you are welcome to contact me should you want help and advice regarding your future options.

Good hunting!

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