

Joint Health in Dogs and Cats

Joint disorder is the #1 chronic condition affecting up to 25% of dogs. Yet less than 15% of dogs afflicted with joint disease actually receive care, thus reducing the quality of life for the animal. Injury, repeated stress, excess weight, poor diet, and genetic predisposition can contribute to unhealthy joints. There are effective treatment options available and significant differences among them.

When the Healthy Joint Becomes Unhealthy

In healthy conditions, the natural joint building blocks, cartilage and synovial fluid, reduce friction and act as a shock absorber. The body makes these joint building blocks normally by producing glycosaminoglycans, or GAGs. These GAGs consist of glucosamine, chondroitin sulfate and hyaluronic acid. In the unhealthy joint, production of these joint building blocks is impaired. The animal's body is unable to keep up with demand for building blocks, resulting in irritation, inflammation, pain, and decreased mobility.

Common Signs of Unhealthy Joints

Pet guardians can easily recognize signs of unhealthy joints in their dog or cat. For dogs, one might notice decreased endurance, stiffness following activities, inability to jump into the car or onto furniture, hesitation getting up, difficulty with stairs, and stumbles or "bunny hops." Cats tend to show signs of joint disorder by reduced grooming, due to pain when twisting or turning. Cat owners may also notice long and overgrown toenails, since scratching hurts the toes and feet. Also, joints may be swollen and seem painful when touched.

Treatment Options

Pet guardians have many options to treat unhealthy joints in their dogs and cats, but they fall primarily into two different categories. There are pharmaceutical, or drug, options and there are natural alternatives. Drug options include non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), which block the production of prostaglandins associated with pain and inflammation; COX-2 inhibitors, which target specific prostaglandins, and Aspirin/Ascriptin®, which reduces pain. These drugs are very good at blocking pain and decreasing inflammation. They do not however add to the body's joint lubricants or biochemical process. Because of the often unacceptable side effects and inherent mechanisms of NSAIDs, there has been a market push toward natural alternatives.

Natural treatment, uses alone or with a drug option, has demonstrative benefits. The Natural process supplies the body with the joint building blocks- glucosamine, chondroitin and hyaluronic acid. This is what the pet's body would provide in a healthy situation. Complete Natural Alternatives also provide select ingredients such as herbs to increase circulation, decrease inflammation and slow oxidative damage allowing the body to repair and rebuild the affected joint.

Key Active Ingredients in Natural Treatment Alternatives

- Joint Building Blocks: Glucosamine and Mucopolysaccharides (Glucosamine, Chondroitin Sulfate, Hyaluronic Acid)
- Anti-inflammatory: Yucca, Black Cohosh, Cayenne, MSM
- Anti-oxidant: Turmeric, Ginger, Devil's Claw, Alfalfa, Vitamin C
- Circulatory stimulant: Nettle, Celery Seed

Non-complete vs. Complete Formulas

If a dog or cat with unhealthy joints receives no treatment, recovery is not likely due to continuing pain, swelling and the body's inability to produce enough of the joint building blocks. This will lead to a less comfortable and less active life for the pet.

If a dog or cat with unhealthy joints receives an incomplete formula, containing only glucosamine and/or chondroitin sulfate, repair of the joint is enabled but the recovery of the pet is not optimized, since these ingredients do not address the inflammation and oxidative free radicals.

If a dog or cat with unhealthy joints receives a complete formula that combines the joint building blocks with ingredients to decrease inflammation, increase circulation, remove free radicals and enhance absorption, optimal and accelerated recovery will result.

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