

What is arthritis?

The inflammation of a joint, usually accompanied by pain, swelling and stiffness. Arthritis is diagnosed through a physical exam and x-rays.

Signs of arthritis

- Stiffness especially after inactivity
- Lameness
- Reluctance to move

Many of these signs worsen with cold weather

### **Treatments for arthritis:**

#### Physical Therapy and Exercise

Low impact exercises 5-7 times a week help improve joint range of motion and strengthen surrounding tissues that support arthritic joints. These exercises include swimming and leash walking. Start with a low level of exercise and incrementally over time. Other physical therapy exercise can be added based on individual needs and pet limitations

#### Pain Relief

There are several different types of pain relief, and depending on your pet's needs. A given pet have different responses to medication and may need adjustments or additions over time. Always carefully follow dosing instructions and consult with you veterinarian before adding or changing medications.

- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) are used to control pain and inflammation. NSAIDS work directly in the joints and soft tissues. These are often the first step in arthritis medication.
- Opiates- pain reliever derived from morphine and work in the brain to block pain receptors. A common example of this is Tramadol.
- Muscle relaxants- work locally to improve mobility in the tissue surrounding the joints
- Neuropathic pain relievers- These work to reduce nerve pain and weakness
- Steroids- suppress inflammation; however there are numerous side effects so their use is limited to end stage disease.

### Weight control:

The more weight your pet carries the more strain on their joints. Weight management is achieved through measured portions of low calorie diets that help pets maintain a reasonable weight. Studies show people and pets who lose 10% of their body weight usually can reduce their use of pain medication

### Nutritional Supplements

Glucosamine and Chondroitin supplements work together to improve the health of the joint, which in turn slows the progression of arthritis. Omega 3 fatty acid supplements and antioxidants can help reduce inflammation and mediate pain. Consult your veterinarian before buying over-the-counter supplements for an accurate dosing for your animal.