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From: lissa [lissa@lissa.net]
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To: Extmagdrl@yahooogroups.com
Subject: [ExtMAGDRL] DOE Topic #9: Holistic Approaches to Canine Arthritis

Hi All,

Sorry, got a little off-track these past few weeks. If you recall, Dog Owner Education (DOE) topic #6 was an overview of commonly prescribed medications used to treat canine arthritis. This week's Dog Owner Education topic #9 is a 'complimentary view' of holistic treatments for the same ailment. The goal is to give you enough information to know when you should ask questions and do your own research if your Dane suffers from arthritis.

Most animals with chronic pain, especially from arthritis, show slower movements, difficulty getting up and down, may wince or growl if touched or handled over the painful part, and may show exercise intolerance. Dogs showing any of these signs should be evaluated for determining the exact cause of their pain. It may be arthritis.

Arthritis, (also called osteoarthritis or degenerative joint disease (DJD),) is a common condition in older dogs and dogs that have suffered injuries. Arthritis is an inflammation of the joint characterized by swelling, stiffness, and pain. When treating pets with arthritis, holistic therapy seeks to counteract these effects of inflammation.

Many dogs can be helped with holistic therapies to heal the joint, whereas others may have arthritis that is too advanced to actually allow for healing. One thing is clear: The earlier the pet is diagnosed and treated, the greater the chance for healing to occur using complementary therapies.

The main benefits of a natural approach to pain relief is the obvious lack of side effects that can be seen with conventional drugs, including sedation, gastrointestinal ulceration, kidney or liver disease, and the potential to damage already diseased cartilage in the arthritic pet.

It is also advantageous if the therapy can slow down the progression of the arthritis and if possible, actually help the joint to heal. While many conventional therapies do a great job of treating inflammation and pain, they usually do not help the joint to heal (in some cases, these anti-inflammatory therapies actually cause more cartilage damage as time progresses.) Conversely, many complementary therapies relieve pain and inflammation and actually supply nutrients to help the cartilage heal and slow down the destructive forces of nature which act to destroy the injured joint.

There are many holistic options for treating a pet with chronic joint disease and pain. These include acupuncture, magnetic therapy, gold bead implant, homeopathy, herbal therapy, and the well accepted use of nutritional therapy. No one therapy fits every pet, and the ultimate decision as to which therapy should be tried depends upon your doctor, your dog, and you.

Recommendations: If your dog shows signs of arthritis - (stiffness and sore joints) consult your vet to get an expert diagnosis before embarking on any form of treatment.

Then lifestyle management changes are a must. Help your pet lose

excess weight, avoid repetitive motions, and choose low-impact activities such as walking instead of jogging. These will not only help an arthritic dog, but will also keep your asymptomatic pet active and pain-free in the years ahead.

Common nutritional therapy recommendations for arthritis include use of Slow-Acting Disease-Modifying Osteoarthritis Agents (SADMOGs.) These agents are believed to help reduce inflammation associated with osteoarthritis plus slow the progression of the disease and possibly promote cartilage synthesis.

SADMOGs are used for two purposes. 1) As with conventional analgesic medicines, these supplements can relieve pain and inflammation without the side effects mentioned above; and 2) unlike conventional therapies that can actually further damage the joint cartilage, these therapies supply molecules to nourish and heal the cartilage. These popular complementary therapies are also most well known to conventional veterinarians and are employed by many conventional doctors as first-line therapy for dogs with chronic arthritis.

Below is a brief review of common nutritional therapies that holistic practitioners may use to control pain and restore function in dogs with arthritis.

Common Arthritis & Joint Care SADMOGs

- . Glucosamine is a natural sugar produced by the body and found in certain foods. It plays an important role in the production, maintenance, and repair of cartilage. It stimulates the production of glycosaminoglycans and proteoglycans, two essential building blocks of cartilage.
- . Chondroitin Sulfate reduces inflammation and assists the Glucosamine in protecting against future cartilage degeneration.
- . Shark Cartilage is a source of Chondroitin Sulfate. It drives the Glucosamine and provides maximum absorption. Also, in many trials it has reduced the possibility of developing cancer. Bovine Trachea can also be used as a source of Chondroitin, however, there is a risk of BSE (Mad Cow Disease).
- . Bromelain cleans away the "debris" in the joints restores proper fluid balance. In addition, it helps to inhibit inflammatory compounds and reduces pain and swelling.
- . Ascorbate (Manganese and ascorbic acid) assists your body with processing the glucosamine. This is a very important ingredient and one that is missing in nearly every glucosamine product on the market today.
- . Yucca has a long history in treating arthritis and rheumatism. The root is rich in sponins that elevate your body's ability to produce cortisone naturally.
- . Omega 3 & 6 fatty acids (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) are constituents of fish oils that act as anti-inflammatory agents. Usually, these products are sold separately in health food stores as salmon or fish oil.
- . Boswellin has been used for centuries in the Indian Ayurvedic system of medicine to maintain healthy joints. Boswellic acids improve blood supply to the joints and maintain the integrity of blood vessels. At least one study has indicated that they may open up collateral blood circulation to provide adequate blood supply to the joints. Boswellin has been known to reduce joint swelling, maintain blood supply to inflamed joints and mobility as well as reduce pain due to stiffness in the joints.
- . Vitamins, particularly A, C, and E promote general health and protect against the harmful effect of free radicals. Vitamin A (Beta carotene) is essential for growth and repair of body tissues and it aids in bone formation. Vitamin C (ascorbic acid) produces a mobilization of the body's self-defense mechanisms, which assists the immune system to overcome disease. And finally, Vitamin E (Tocopherol) is an antioxidant, which acts

to protect red blood cells and unsaturated fatty acids from oxidation damage. It also assists the body in maintaining healthy membrane tissue.

The consensus seems to be to start with least stringent approaches to managing arthritis, but escalate treatment as necessary. First, manage the arthritic pet's lifestyle; second, try the less invasive holistic remedies to see if they may improve the condition; and last, use stronger prescription drug treatments like Rimadyl, Deramaxx, or other NSAIDs to reduce pain and inflammation.

The information being shared in this summary is a compendium of various veterinary and holistic web sites on the Arthritis Web Directory here <http://www.arthritis-resource-directory.com/Arthritis-Resources.html> It also includes excerpts from an article called "Holistic Approaches to Arthritis Therapies for Pets" by Shawn Messonnier, DVM (full text here: http://www.byregion.net/articles-healers/Pet_Arthritis.html)

As always, thanks for educating yourselves to benefit all dogs!

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