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Spondylosis Deformans

General Information

Spondylosis deformans is a disorder of dogs and cats characterized by development of bony spurs (osteophytes) on the ends of the vertebrae (bones of the spine). These bony spurs may form on one or more vertebrae. When they occur on neighboring vertebrae, these vertebrae may eventually fuse together (ankylose). Osteophyte production is progressive, and both their number and size increase with age. The most likely location of spondylosis is in the vertebrae from the lower chest to the pelvis. While all breeds of dogs are susceptible, the incidence of spondylosis is higher in larger breeds of dogs.

Researchers believe that osteophyte production is a result of degenerative changes in the intervertebral disks, the flexible fibrous connections between the vertebrae. Vertebral osteophytes may also form as a result of instability between adjacent vertebrae.

While many pets with spondylosis do not show any signs, some affected animals have pain and/or lameness. In severe cases, spinal cord damage is evident. Difficulty in getting up, pain in the lower back and stiffness are the most common signs.

Important Points in Treatment

1. Radiographs (x-rays) are necessary to evaluate the spine and monitor progress of the disease.
2. In most cases, analgesic or anti-inflammatory drugs and rest are all that is necessary in treatment. Pets with severe spinal cord damage may be referred to a veterinary neurologist and/or surgeon for treatment.
3. *Medication:* Give all medication as directed. Call the doctor if you are unable to medicate your pet.
4. *Activity:* Restrict your pet's activity as follows: _____

Notify the Doctor if Any of the Following Occur

- Your pet's signs appear to worsen.
- Your pet develops new signs.
- Your pet's signs recur after an apparent recovery.
- Your pet's general health changes.