



OPEN 7 DAYS

Cnr. of Empire
and Alpha Streets

827 7099
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www.cambridgevets.co.nz

Open Hours:

Monday

8:00am - 7:00pm

Tuesday

8:00am - 7:00pm

Wednesday

8:00am - 7:00pm

Thursday

8:00am - 5:00pm

Friday

8:00am - 5:00pm

Saturday

9:00am - 12:30pm

Sunday

9:00 - 12:00pm

Weight Management Clinic

Don't forget we offer a free weight clinic here at Cambridge Vets. This is one on one support with a qualified nurse to help your pet get back into a healthy weight range.



Sit & Paws

Cambridge Vets



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Arthritis Focus

Getting a bit chilly isn't it?!

Now that the colder weather is upon us it's that time of year that we often get clients coming in asking about what can they do for their 'older' pet who is slowing down and a bit stiff. Arthritis may well be a fact of life for many, but it doesn't need to be something that any of us or our pets have to suffer through! There are lots of options available from very basic but effective measures that can be instigated early, through to advanced procedures for arthritis treatment.

As we get older the cartilage in our joints begins to wear down until bone can rub on bone; as this occurs, joint fluid production is decreased, thus continuing the degenerative process. Eventually the area becomes irritated, inflamed and begins to form sharp ridges and edges that cause further pain and inflammation. So your pet may not just be 'getting old'; some of the common signs of arthritis include:

- Chronic lameness that progressively gets worse with time.
- Lameness which is made worse with exercise or long periods of lying down.
- Stiff at the walk or run which sometimes improves as the animal warms up.
- Joint swelling.
- Often in cats it is a reluctance or increased difficulty in jumping and getting up to their favourite sleeping spots.

Arthritis cannot be cured but we can manage progression of the disease process and keep our animals much more comfortable and pain free.

There are numerous treatments and products available to manage joint pain and each one has its proponents and detractors. One thing that is agreed on by experts is that arthritis management should be 'multi-modal' which means best results come when many different approaches are used concurrently. The most important treatment of arthritis involves first and foremost **exercise and weight management**. The experts agree that if you do not manage these two properly, then you can throw your money at all the supplements and medications in the world but they will not be as effective as they could be.

Exercise Management: regular walks and proper exercise are important to maintain as much muscle mass as possible to support the abnormal joints. This does not mean just letting your pet wander around your property. You still need to get out there and actually take them for a walk. What is important is to not overdo it though: hard running, stairs, inclines or excessive runs will make your pet more sore.

Weight management: less weight on those sore joints means increased mobility and less wear and tear long term. Enough said.

Diet: Specific diets to help manage arthritis are available. For those animals needing help to maintain healthy joints and improve mobility and lose weight, hills produce a JD/Metabolic food.



Arthritis Focus continued.....

Chondroprotective Agents

(glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate, creatine, MSM)

The body has natural mechanisms to rebuild damaged cartilage and improve muscle mass on its own, but these mechanisms require raw materials. A common method, especially in earlier stages of arthritic change, is to provide these materials orally as nutritional supplements. There are numerous brands on the market but there are two important caveats with their use:

- These products require weeks to build up in the body to a point where there is a detectable result. They are considered slow acting, plus their effects are usually mild.
- Many of these products are not regulated in the same way as drugs are. They are only required to be shown to be safe but not effective, and there is no quality control. To be sure you are buying a legitimate product ask for your veterinarians recommendation as not all products are equal.

Pentosan: This is one of the most common drugs we use. It is an injectable polysulfated glycosaminoglycan (mostly chondroitin sulphate). It serves as a cartilage component used in healing but also as an anti-inflammatory agent and we find it very effective and very safe. A course of injections is required initially and then it can be used long term monthly.

Supplements with Anti-inflammatory properties (green lipped muscle extract, omega three fatty acids, grape seed oil, turmeric etc.)

There are a number of natural extracts and herbal products with anti-inflammatory properties. Some are anti-oxidants which strike at the actual progression of the arthritis, while others interfere with the inflammatory cascade to limit pain and inflammation. Most are modest in their abilities and some can take weeks to build up in the body. As with all supplements, manufacturers only have to prove safety as opposed to efficacy so ask your vet for a reputable source.

For July and August we are running a special for our senior pet club members only. FREE trial treatment of anti-inflammatories are available for both cats and dogs. So book today for an assessment of your pet.....

A useful link for more information is
www.caninearthritis.co.nz

Of these supplements, omega three fatty acids from cold water fish oils has probably shown the most promise. The appropriate dose is still somewhat controversial but the ratio of EPA to DHA should be 3:2. (Please do not use cod liver oil as it is very high in Vitamin A and can be toxic. Also flax seed oil is readily converted to omega 3 fatty acids in the human body but not in cats or dogs. Only 10% is converted so therefore it is a waste of money)

Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (nsaids) – these are a family of drugs which reduce inflammation in the body. They can be extremely effective but in rare cases some animals can get a gastrointestinal upset and/or liver and kidney issues so they must be used wisely. **NSAIDS work by suppressing the effects of prostaglandins (pgs) which are important mediators of inflammation and pain but not all pgs are harmful. Humans are much more resistant to the problems caused by suppressing the good pgs but dogs and cats are not, and side effects are much more likely. Cats are uniquely sensitive so please only ever use these medications under vet guidance and in no way ever give cats paracetamol as it is highly toxic.**

Straight Pain Relief Medications (usually used in combination with the above NSAIDS)

These medications do nothing for the disease process but they do help with the pain. They do have the potential for drowsiness so it is important to find the dose that relieves pain and improves mobility without making the pet too sleepy.

Specialised Products:

Stem Cell Therapy: This is another regenerative therapy that yields a product that is made from the patients' own tissue (usually fat) and processed into a product that is injected into the joint. It is a relatively new therapy and has shown some good promise.

There are more products being tested and showing good promise for long term treatments such as platelet rich plasma injections, polyphenols, turmeric, dried milk proteins, avocado/soybean extracts etc.

WATCH THIS SPACE!

