



ARTHRITIS

Arthritis is a complex condition involving inflammation of joints. There are many causes but in general the degree of arthritis is directly related to the age of the animal. As with us, the older the dog the stiffer the joints.

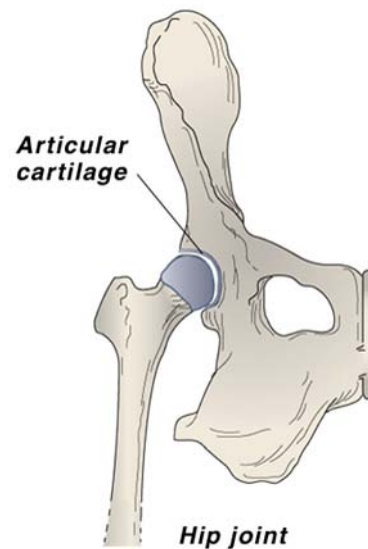
What causes arthritis?

The condition may be immune mediated and in certain dogs rheumatoid arthritis (RA) factors can be detected with blood tests. Other causes include joint infection, which can be the result of bites or injuries or it can follow other damage to the joint.

Rheumatoid arthritis is an immune mediated, erosive, inflammatory condition. Cartilage and bone are eroded within affected joints and the condition can progress to complete joint fixation, (ankylosis). It may affect single joints or multiple joints may be involved (polyarthritis).

By far the most common type of arthritis is osteoarthritis (OA) which is perhaps better described as degenerative joint disease (DJD). This can be **primary**, the cause of which is unknown and **secondary**, following problems affecting joint mobility, e.g. anterior cruciate ligament rupture, hip dysplasia etc.

Infective or septic arthritis can be caused by a variety of micro organisms, e.g. bacteria, viruses and funguses. Usually only a single joint is affected and the condition results in fever, heat and pain in the joint which is frequently very swollen. Before long your pet is likely to go off food and become very depressed.



How do we treat arthritis?

Hydrotherapy is recommended as low impact, controlled exercise to aid the stiffness and pain caused by arthritis.



Candy Thompson in the spa



Tom Prosser in the pool

Your veterinary surgeon will prescribe medication to your animal depending on the severity of the condition and will recommend hydrotherapy as a means of supportive treatment. The buoyancy of the water provides non-impact exercise whilst the resistance increases muscle mass to strengthen the arthritic joint.

The hydrotherapist may decide to use either the pool or water walker to aid the symptoms of arthritis. This will depend on the behaviour of the animal, the joint of interest and the range of movement achieved. The spa is also an excellent piece of equipment to use with arthritic dogs as the warmer water eases muscles and joints and increases blood flow around the body.



Bob Norman in the water walker