

MANAGING ARTHRITIS USING NATURAL APPROACHES

Below is a 6 part series that was posted during 2015 on Animal Equilibrium Facebook Page.

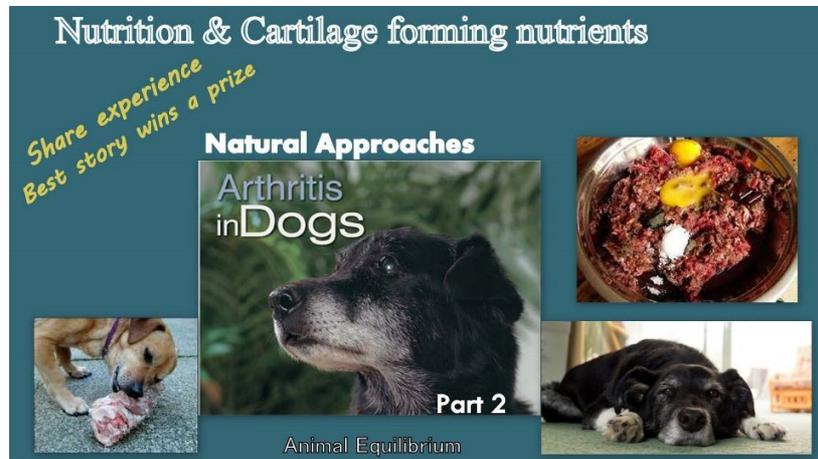
If you read these suggestions and click onto our Facebook page and post your story, then regardless of this competition being run during 2015, you will still win a prize.



So What is OA and how can Natural Therapies help my dog ?

Osteoarthritis is the number one cause of chronic pain in dogs. It is a degenerative disease that causes pain, loss of mobility, and a decreased quality of life. Signs of arthritis include stiffness when getting up or lying down, limping, slowing down on walks, pain after exercise, or reluctance to jump or climb steps.

Mary writes " When my dog, was diagnosed with severe dysplasia in both elbows at a year old, I was told that, even with the surgery, she would develop arthritis in those joints. By the time she was six, she was on daily NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as Rimadyl to relieve the pain that otherwise caused her to limp. At the time, I thought I'd be lucky if she made it past the age of ten before becoming too lame to walk or suffering from the side effects of drugs. It was then that I learned about the benefits of a natural diet, homeopathy, herbal remedies, the benefits of acupressure and bodywork. I got a lot of good advice and therapy support along the way from qualified professionals. The net result? At age 15, her elbows are visibly deformed but she still enjoys one hour walks every day. She no longer runs, but jogs along at a comfortable pace. I let her decide how far and how fast we go so that I don't risk pushing her beyond her limits.



Nutrition & cartilage forming nutrients

There are many natural treatments, which can give unexpected freedom and mobility to sore joints. But first things first, review the diet! Before you read on, remember share your own experiences to be in the running to win a prize - winner announced next Tuesday!

Choose a diet that is unprocessed and does not contain synthetic ingredients. A good option is a species appropriate raw food diet. A balanced raw or lightly cooked diet contains beneficial live enzymes and is packed with bio-available nutrients.

3 dietary components to consider for arthritic dogs

Fats

Fat supplies the most calories to a diet, and therefore its levels and quality must be closely monitored. Obesity is directly related to the onset or aggravation of arthritis. So if your dog is overweight, then your first job is to promote weight loss. This is best achieved through a high protein, low fat diet. A diet high in omega 6 fatty acids will promote inflammation within the body, adding omega 3 fatty acids (especially DHA and EPA) balances the omega 6 potency and reduces its inflammatory effects. Combine vitamin E with fatty acid supplementation to avoid a deficiency.

Proteins

Providing a lean protein source is ideal for arthritic dogs. Feeding a lean meat or a grass fed meat, allows you to supply more calories in the form of omega 3 fatty acids. Protein and carbohydrates supply equal amounts of calories per gram in a diet, however protein has a higher nutritional impact and therefore less can be fed to supply nutritional needs. Protein supports strong muscles which aids in joint motility (this is particularly important in degenerative diseases such as hip dysplasia).

Carbohydrates

There are two types of carbohydrates to avoid in an arthritic dog: grains/starches and night-shade vegetables. Both contribute to inflammation, which aggravates arthritis. Grains, such as wheat, rice,

barley and corn, fluctuate the blood sugars levels and create swelling. Night-shade vegetables also aggravate arthritis, and these include tomatoes, peppers, egg plant and potatoes (not to be confused with sweet potato). If you are feeding a commercial diet, check the ingredients carefully. Foods that have shown to help with arthritis include; celery, ginger, kale, blueberries, papaya & mango (for their natural enzymes), alfalfa, grated carrot and beets.

Glucosamine, Chondroitin and Glycosaminoglycans (GAGs)

These nutrients are at the top of the list when it comes to managing arthritis. They nourish the articular cartilage and increase joint health. Glucosamine and chondroitin (often supplemented as glucosamine sulfate, glucosamine HCl, and chondroitin sulfate) are absorbed into the articular cartilage where they are made into GAGs and finally into proteoglycans. Proteoglycans help to heal articular cartilage and keep the joint lubricated. Glucosamine and chondroitin are produced naturally in the body, however times of stress or damage (such as arthritis) require supplementation to maintain cartilage health. Green lipped mussels and raw bones are good natural sources of glucosamine and chondroitin.

Click onto this video by Dr Karen Becker for more info on factors affecting musculo-skeletal health <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOVKJat7vbQ>



Homeopathic Remedies

In Part 3 of the series we will look at homeopathic remedies. Successful homeopathic treatment for arthritis in dogs requires an owner who can read and understand the symptoms their dog is displaying. For instance, a dog experiencing joint pain and fatigue at night would need a different remedy from one suffering from early morning stiffness. Below is a list of some of the more common remedies used for treatment in dogs and the symptoms they address.

- Arnica relieves pain in injured joints that then develop chronic arthritis.

- Bryonia addresses throbbing pain brought on by exertion.
- Calcarea carbonica addresses pain in overweight dogs who tire easily. Redness and inflammation, along with weakness and cramping often occur when exposed to cold and damp weather.
- Calcarea fluorica addresses arthritis where joints are enlarged and deformed and that improves with warmth and exercise.
- Calcarea phosphorica addresses aches in bones and exhaustion from exertion. It also reduces calcium deposits and bone-spurs.
- Causticum helps with arthritis that causes bone and joint deformities, tendon problems and muscle weakness. Cold and damp exacerbate the pain and there is relief when warm compresses are applied.
- Culcamara helps with arthritis in overweight dogs who are also experiencing back pain and that worsens in cold weather.
- Kali carbonicum helps thickened and/or deformed joints that experience increased pain during cold, damp weather.
- Rhus toxicodendron addresses arthritis with joint pain and stiffness that is worse after a night's sleep and that responds to warmth and exercise.
- Ruta graveolens addresses arthritis characterized with lameness and stiffness that is exacerbated from cold and damp weather. It also helps with tendon damage.

For symptomatic management, daily doses are often needed and the strength of remedies varying from 6C up to 30C.

In addition to homeopathy the use of mineral tissue salts can also have a positive effect overall on body nutrition and joint health. Tissue salts treat disease by supplying the body with deficient cell salts, the 12 inorganic compounds that make up the cell, thus assisting the body's return to healthy functioning. While tissue salts are more like a mineral supplement than a homeopathic potency, they should be given with care, then discontinued once healing has taken place. Generally 1-3 tablets of each mineral tissue salt are dissolved and given once to three times a day depending on symptoms and severity.

Mineral Tissue Salts that can help with arthritis include :

Calcarea fluorica – can help with the the outer surface of the bones, and also maintaining elasticity of connective tissue.

Calcarea phosphorica -can support most bone diseases.

Ferrum phosphoricum - helps with first stage of inflammation and joint problems and injuries.

For the elderly dog with a range of problems including arthritis a blend of all 12 Mineral tissue salts may often provide overall support.

Homeopathic remedies and mineral tissue salts can be obtained from homeopathic pharmacies, some natural food stores and human or animal homeopaths.

To read more about homeopathy as a modality with arthritis click onto Dr Charles Loops DVM webpage. Dr Loop is well known for his work with chronic degenerative conditions including arthritis and cancer. <http://www.charlesloopsdvm.com/articles/arthritis-remedies>



Herbal Remedies

There are a range of herbs that can help at different stages of Arthritis. There are 3 categories below, ones that are well known as providing general support, others mainly for acute pain and inflammation and others that provide great antioxidant benefits.

Remember, share your story/ tips to be in the running for a prize. Would have loved to have given away a prize this week but we need suggestions and for people to post, so have a go!

Well known herbs for support

1. Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) is an anti-inflammatory herb that has been effectively used specifically for arthritis.
2. Boswellia (*Boswellia carteri*) is another herb traditionally used for arthritis. Both turmeric and boswellia are popular herbs used to treat arthritis in Ayurvedic medicine.
3. Devil's claw (*Harpagophytum procumbens*), an herb from South Africa, is a potent anti-inflammatory and is specific for treating arthritis and rheumatism.
4. Alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*) and yucca root (*Yucca spp.*) are herbs that traditionally have been used to treat arthritis. The best part of these two herbs is that they can be grown in your own backyard.

Herbs for Arthritis Pain and Inflammation

1. Licorice root (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) for its potent anti-inflammatory action. Reported to have similar action to cortisone but without the side effects.
2. Wild yam (*Dioscorea villosa*) also has been reported to be good for painful arthritis, with actions similar to cortisone.
3. St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) not only eases the pain, it helps in the healing process, especially of damaged nerves.
4. Feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*) is especially good for the more actively painful arthritis or rheumatism where muscle pain is also involved.

5. Willow bark (*Salix* spp.) is rich in anti-inflammatory salicylates, the stuff found in aspirin.
6. Cayenne (*Capsicum annuum*) taken internally seems to offer pain relief for some patients. In addition, cayenne acts as a systemic stimulant, helping move herbs and other medicines into joint areas where they are needed.

Herbs as Antioxidants

Antioxidants protect cells from damage caused by free radicals. Free radicals are produced when a cell is exposed to any of a number of toxins, including pesticides, herbicides, toxic emissions in the air, etc. Free radicals are also produced by cells surrounding the joint whenever excess or abnormal strains or pressures are applied. Many herbs are highly antioxidant as well as containing good levels of necessary vitamins. Herbs such as oregano (*Origanum majorana*), thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*) and celery seeds (*Apium graveolens*) because they can be sprinkled on a pet's food daily, much as you would season your own dinner.

For all the herbs, you can use the loose leaf or powder version alternatively the concentrated doses found in tinctures and/or capsules can be more potent. In this case, it is often recommended to use the human dose adjusted to the dogs weight

Laser Therapy

Share your story
Win a prize !

Natural Approaches

Arthritis
in Dogs

Part 5

Animal Equilibrium

Laser Therapy.

Cold laser therapy is a non-invasive procedure that uses light to stimulate cells and increase blood circulation. At the correct laser wavelength, pain signals are reduced and nerve sensitivity decreases. The procedure also releases endorphins, or natural painkillers. The procedure is based on the idea that light is absorbed into the cells. The process, known as photo-biotherapy, stimulates protein synthesis and cell metabolism, which improves cell health and functionality.

The therapy can take as little as eight to 10 minutes on a small dog or about a half hour for bigger dogs with more arthritic areas.

There are various types of cold lasers but in general they are expensive pieces of therapy equipment with a history of effective use with both humans and animals. Click onto this video clip and print article titled "Veterinarians add Laser Therapy to Arthritis treatments" to learn more about this modality.
<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/laser-therapy-staves-off-pets-arthritis/story?id=12974694>

Lasers can be used not only by veterinarians but also qualified therapists. Most reputable manufacturers and distributors of cold lasers provide training and certification for professionals on the effective use of lasers in a range of muscular skeletal conditions with different species. Laser can be used alongside other manual therapy techniques and homeopathic and herbal remedies.

Red light therapy torches and wraps are a form of laser, whilst not as effective, they are far less expensive and potentially affordable for the dog owner. They are also easier to use and provide benefits in such chronic conditions like arthritis.

Helen uses Spectravet Lasers /www.facebook.com/SpectraVET both multiprobe and deep tissue lasers in her human, canine and equine treatments.



Hands On Therapies

This week, we look at hands on therapies that have reported benefits in provision of pain relief and increased mobility and function for dogs with arthritis. This is not a comprehensive list, so do share if you have had success with other approaches.

Acupuncture/Acupressure

A traditional Chinese medical technique for relieving pain and improving general health. When using

acupuncture to manage arthritis, often older dogs need a program of monthly treatments. Acupuncture can be carried out using laser, needles, and also via use of the hands known as acupressure.

Chiropractic

Chiropractors gently manipulate and correct the spine using a specific force applied with either their hands or an instrument. A spinal adjustment is simply a short, low-force thrust designed to take the affected joint just past its normal range of motion. A list of qualified chiropractors is available on the Australian Veterinary Chiropractic Association website www.chirovet.com.au

Bowen Therapy

A specific form of myofascial release developed by Australian Tom Bowen in the 1950s, the Bowen Technique uses gentle but powerful soft tissue moves across muscle, tendons and ligaments. With gentle movements across these areas, tension in the fascial system can be deactivated. Like other natural therapies, the main goal of the Bowen Technique is to stimulate the body's own self-healing mechanisms. This therapy successfully realigns the body, using less force than other natural therapies, such as chiropractic care. A list of registered canine therapists is available via the Bowen Therapy Federation www.bowen.asn.au

Reiki

Reiki works by channelling universal life force energies to promote healing and feelings of well being in canines. A Japanese technique also used for stress reduction and relaxation, Reiki was founded by Dr Mikao Usui during the early 20th century.

Reiki practitioners place their hands gently on an animals body to channel natural energies. The Reiki energy is felt as a comforting warmth radiating from the practitioners hands into the body and is generally calming and relaxing. Reiki is not traditionally used to achieve a specific outcome but is used to improve a dogs general health and wellbeing.

Craniosacral Therapy

Another gentle, hands-on therapy for canines is craniosacral treatment. Taught by American Dr John Upledger throughout the mid-1970s, this natural therapy aims to restore balance and enhance resistance to disease by working with the body's internal rhythms. The craniosacral system is made up of the cerebrospinal fluid and membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord. Craniosacral balancing is a deeply relaxing treatment involving very light touches. It is especially beneficial for problems originating from trauma to a dogs head or spine.

When considering therapists choose those that are qualified and registered with professional associations. The International Institute for Complementary Therapists recognize a number of alternative modalities and their application with animals, where specific professional associations do not exist. Check out their registration listing on www.iict.com.au

[As with all complementary therapies the advice and healing given does not replace the services, views and opinions of your veterinarian.](#)

[Animal Equilibrium does not dispense veterinary advice, diagnosis or prescriptions. Whenever a person feels that they require veterinary advice, I encourage the person to seek such advice from their veterinarian as soon as practical.](#)

