

Dog's Lameness or Holding Leg Up

The causes and treatments of lameness in dogs.

CAUSES OF LAMENESS

Trauma: Fractures, luxations (dislocations), cranial cruciate rupture, all of which may lead to degenerative arthritis (osteoarthritis). Distal physeal injury (causing angular deformity of the forelimb) or pathological fracture (secondary to a disease process).

Congenital/Inherited disorders: Hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia, familial footpad hyperkeratosis (in Irish Terriers and Dogues de Bordeaux), patellar luxation, or angular deformity of the forelimb (in Bulldogs, Pugs, Boston Terriers, Basset Hounds, Dachshunds).

Miscellaneous: Osteochondrosis (in large breed dogs; contributing factors include overnutrition, rapid growth, trauma, heredity), hypertrophic osteodystrophy (young large or giant breeds, possibly due to overnutrition), intervertebral disk disease, aseptic necrosis of the femoral head (Legg-Calve-Perthes disease), panosteitis, hypertrophic osteopathy, fibrotic myopathy, or polymyositis.

Infectious diseases: Septic arthritis (infectious arthritis), interdigital furunculosis (interdigital cysts) due to bacterial infection, or osteomyelitis (infection/inflammation of the bone and bone marrow) due to bacterial or fungal infections.

Tumors: In nerves, bones, muscles, cartilage, fibrous tissue, and other locations.

Parasites/Parasite-borne diseases: Rocky Mountain spotted fever, ehrlichiosis, or borreliosis.

Endocrine disorder: Hyperparathyroidism (primary and secondary).

Nutritional/Metabolic disorders: Nutritional secondary hyperparathyroidism, vitamin D deficiency, vitamin A excess, or rickets.

Immune-mediated diseases: Rheumatoid arthritis, Greyhound polyarthritis, or systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE).

What to do: If you think your dog has a fracture (see Broken Bone), keep the dog calm and immobile to prevent further injury. If your dog is bleeding, apply pressure to wound, if possible (see Bleeding). Apply only enough pressure to control the bleeding; excessive pressure could worsen the injury. Cover dog to keep him warm, then immediately take him to the veterinarian or emergency clinic for further treatment.

For other types of lameness, call your veterinarian during regular office hours to make an appointment for diagnosis and treatment. If you're not sure what to do, contact your veterinarian or emergency clinic immediately.

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Have a health question about your dog? Ask our vet expert or ask other dog owners on our forums.