

Torn Cruciate Ligament is a Common Dog Injury

Medication alone won't likely keep a big dog walking after a torn anterior cruciate ligament.

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Q. My vet diagnosed my Staffordshire Bull Terrier boy with a torn anterior cruciate ligament. He prescribed Rimadyl and rest. He's better now, but my question is: "Will this end up requiring surgery on his knee someday?"

A. A torn anterior cruciate ligament (known as an ACL tear in humans) is the most common orthopedic injury in dogs. Just like with human athletes, it occurs after a twisting or jarring of the knee, such as when chasing after a Frisbee.

When this ligament tears, the knee joint loses stability, and the tibia (the bone below the knee) is able to slide forward and backward.

The general rule of thumb in treating these injuries is that dogs less than 25 pounds can get better with rest and anti-inflammatory medication, while those more than 25 pounds usually require surgery to stabilize the knee.

I would guess that your SBT is more than 25 pounds, so you might want to revisit the issue with your veterinarian, or seek a second opinion. Knee surgery can be expensive in dogs, ranging from about \$500 all the way up to \$3,000, depending on the procedure performed. After surgery, you will need to confine your dog in a crate for four to six weeks; this can be very challenging for some dogs.

Without surgery, your dog is at risk for developing severe arthritis, which may require increasing doses of anti-inflammatory medications to control. These medications are effective, but can have powerful side effects on the liver, kidney and GI tract, so there are risks to long term use.

Best, Jon Geller, DVM

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