

Care for Dysplastic Dog

Surgery likely for young Sheltie with elbow dysplasia.

Jon Geller, DVM

Posted: Mon Feb 7 00:00:00 PST 2005

Q. I have a 2-year-old Sheltie who has developed pronounced limping in his left front leg. X-rays indicate that he has elbow dysplasia with a 1 mm discrepancy where the ulna and radius meet. I now have him on a low fat diet to reduce his weight. He takes Cosequin DS and will be taking the anti-inflammatory Rimadyl for a short period of time until he is out of this flare-up. He has mild to moderate degenerative changes in this elbow. I am concerned with how to care for him in the future. Please advise what I should or should not do with a young, energetic dog who has arthritis. I would not want to exercise him in a way that would worsen the situation and am concerned about all phases of care for him, feeding, exercise, dog beds or other helpful ideas, to make his situation the best that it can be. A. Arthritis in a young dog is always a concern, because, most likely, it will get worse over time. Prescription and nonprescription medications may help, but some can have significant side effects, especially non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDS) like Rimadyl and Deramaxx. In older dogs, limiting activity, weight loss and minimal doses of medication can be effective in maintaining a good quality of life. However, in a young dog such as yours, I would consider consulting with a veterinary surgeon about possible surgical treatment of the joint. During arthroscopy, instruments are inserted through very small incisions into a joint and the surgeon sees a magnified image of the joint on a TV monitor. This can be very effective in removing loose cartilage and "cleaning up" changes due to arthritis. It might be necessary to repeat such a procedure later. In any event, please consider a surgical consult with a board-certified surgeon. Your regular veterinarian should be able to refer you. If surgery is not an option, then continue on your current plan. A combination of weight loss, restricted activity, nutraceuticals like glucosamine, an orthopedic bed and occasional dosing with NSAIDS will help your dog be comfortable. Over time, safer and more effective medications may be developed. Best, Jon Geller, DVM - Get More Advice From Dr. Geller -