

## Natural Health Solutions

**A Funny Walk: Disk disease affects many small breeds. When minor, it can be treated without surgery.**

*Shawn Messonnier, DVM*

Millie is a friendly 4-year-old female Dachshund. Until a recent visit with me, she had never shown signs of any health problems. Prior visits consisted of annual checkups, parasite evaluations, and blood-titer testing to determine if and when she required any vaccinations.

This visit was different. According to Millie's owners, she "started walking funny" the night before. Her owners did not notice if the dog had injured herself, and she did not appear to be in pain when she walked or when they held her. Because she had never exhibited this behavior before and because the change came so quickly, they brought the Dachshund to my office for a visit.

Millie was so enthusiastic to greet me it was hard to convince her to hold still so I could examine her properly. After we exchanged greetings, I carefully felt along her spine to see if there was any looseness and checked her spinal column for pain by gently pushing into her spinal muscles. Fortunately, I found no abnormalities during this part of the examination.

When Millie walked on the floor for me, however, I could see why her owners described her as walking funny. Even though she was able to use her back legs, she dragged her left rear leg and occasionally her right rear leg.

### The diagnosis

It was obvious that Millie was suffering from disk disease, a common malady of many smaller dog breeds, especially Dachshunds. The intervertebral disks function as shock absorbers between the bones of the spinal column. The disks cushion the bones as the dog walks, jumps and moves around. Unfortunately, Dachshunds and other smaller breeds are sometimes born with bad disks.

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