

Vets Use Arthroscopic Surgery to Repair Dog Knees

Arthroscopic surgery used by vets at Michigan State University offers dogs the same advantages it provides people.

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Michigan State University's Veterinary Teaching Hospital is now using arthroscopic surgery on dogs, a minimally invasive procedure used to diagnose and sometimes repair minor damage to knees, shoulders and other joints.

"Many dog owners have had similar surgeries," said Jennifer Au, DVM, an MSU veterinarian and orthopedic surgeon. "They know that the recovery time is shorter and that it's more comfortable than having an incision made through the entire knee."

Instead of opening up the dog's knee with one large incision, several small incisions are made around the knee. The surgeons can then insert a camera to see what might be wrong with the knee and then take steps to repair the damage.

"This is both a diagnostic and therapeutic procedure," Dr. Au said. "Instead of opening up the knee from top to bottom, we can go in through two little portals and look around. We can also do the repair at the same time."

The repair is a minimally invasive stabilization of the knee using a procedure known as minimally invasive modified retinacular imbrication technique (MI-MRIT). According to the university, it is done by passing the suture normally used with an open approach through two small incisions in addition to the two small scope portals or holes.

"Cruciate and meniscal ligament injuries are the most common orthopedic conditions we see," Au said. "A lot of times there is an assault that pushes it over the edge, and often that involves squirrel chasing — some motion in which the dog plants and turns or stops short."