

Dog Arthritis Treatments

New arthritis treatments help aching dogs get back on their feet.

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A large dog also may be at greater risk because of its rapid growth from puppyhood. "A dog that's going to be five pounds when it's fully mature and a dog that's going to be 100 pounds are essentially going to mature in that same year," said Susan Weiss, president of Ark Naturals, a manufacturer of natural supplements in Naples, Fla. "It's not easy for a dog to become 100 pounds in that same 12-month cycle. It absolutely affects their joints and ligaments."

Until recently, veterinarians would suggest obese animals lose weight and restrict exercise to prevent joint strain, said Spencer Johnston, DVM, a small-animal orthopedic surgeon and associate professor at Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine in Blacksburg, Va. "Then they would be treated with an anti-inflammatory or analgesic drug such as aspirin, phenylbutazone or meclufenamic acid."

But other arthritis relief products have been enhanced, introduced or made widely available in the United States.

And not a moment too soon for the Rennicks, who could not tolerate seeing their dog in pain. "He was hurting so much one day, he couldn't even lift his head," Cathey Rennick said.

With their veterinarian, they explored the myriad treatment options available.

Among the most widely prescribed new medicines are: Carprofen, an oral nonsteroidal, anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) that reduces joint inflammation and pain when administered twice daily. Rare side effects have included gastrointestinal disturbances, adverse kidney reactions, nervous system reactions and liver problems, but the product is safe for long-term use. Etodolac, also an oral NSAID that reduces joint inflammation, needs to be administered only once a day. Side effects may include vomiting, lethargy and diarrhea. Polysulfated glycosaminoglycan, an osteoarthritis drug for controlling the signs of canine arthritis, reduces painful inflammation and inhibits cartilage-degrading enzymes while restoring the degraded synovial fluid (the lubricating fluid around joint cartilage) and stimulating production of cartilage matrix components to repair damaged cartilage.