

Natural Dog Success Story: Tripod No More

Australian herb combination gets Holly back on her arthritic leg.

Denise Flaim

The dog: Holly, a 12-year-old Beagle-Labrador Retriever mix.

The problem: So severely arthritic that she wouldn't put any weight on her left rear leg, "Holly was basically a three-legged dog," says Carol Galka, DVM, whose mother Betty owns the plucky senior-citizen hound-retriever. Eventually, Holly's disused leg atrophied, losing all muscle tone.

The conventional approach: In treating degenerative joint disease, many veterinarians recommend glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate supplements, believed to help repair and restore cartilage. To reduce inflammation and control pain, some veterinarians also prescribe nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDs, although Galka warns that prolonged use can cause liver damage and intestinal distress.

The holistic approach: Galka tried a couple of glucosamine-chondroitin products on Holly, with little result. Instead of an NSAID, Galka prescribed a pain-relieving herb called boswellia, derived from a tree native to India. However, the elderly dog continued her tripod imitation.

Then Galka came across an Australian product called DGP, short for Dog-Gone Pain. The herbal formulation contains some anti-inflammatory herbs that she was familiar with, such as feverfew, celery seed, and turmeric, as well as the boswellia Holly was already getting. DGP also contains a proprietary blend of some unnamed herbs native to Australia. "Holly was so bad," Galka says, "I thought, 'What did we have to lose?'"

The result: "It took about one week to start seeing her bear some weight on the leg, and she steadily improved from that point forward," says Galka, who stresses that she has no connection to DGP, and indeed was "exceedingly skeptical" about the chewable tablets.

But she couldn't discount how Holly's lameness disappeared; as the dog began to use her atrophied leg again, her muscle returned. "Now, a year later, that leg looks completely like the other," Galka says. "I am still amazed each time I see her."

Galka says she has recommended DGP to a half-dozen clients with severely arthritic dogs — including one who was considering euthanasia — with similarly glowing results.

Caveats: Some herbs and herbal combinations can cause gastrointestinal reactions such as diarrhea, although Galka says she has not seen anything significant with DGP. "Expense may be another issue," she says, adding that dosage for a medium-size dog can cost upwards of \$1 a day.

Galka also notes that she used DGP in conjunction with a glucosamine-chondroitin supplement and is not sure how much the DGP's synergy with the latter contributed to Holly's dramatic recovery.

And as with any supplement or herbal remedy, confer with your veterinarian to make sure DGP is suitable for your dog and will not interfere with other medications, particularly antibiotics, anticoagulants, and NSAIDs.

Denise Flaim is a DOG FANCY contributing editor.