THE OSTEOARTHRITIS BOOKLET

canine arthritis management

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WHAT IS ARTHRITIS?

Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common cause of chronic pain in dogs, affecting up to two out of five young dogs and four out of five of older dogs. It is a painful and debilitating progressive disease which initially affects moving joints but eventually results in pain throughout the whole body. It is a leading cause of behavioural issues, and has a huge impact on dogs' quality of life.

How does it affect my dog?

The major clinical sign of arthritis is joint pain, leading to reduced joint mobility, muscle wastage, and eventually severe discomfort, poor quality of life and inability to walk or stand.

How does arthritis progress?

Arthritis starts with degeneration of the normal structures within the joint. The resulting pain causes the dog to reduce its normal use of the joint and the whole limb. Through disuse the surrounding muscles, ligaments and tendons waste away, causing weakness. This causes compensatory muscular pain elsewhere in the body as the dog has to adapt due to this weakness whilst continuing to mobilise. Arthritis can eventually also lead to "chronic pain" where the nervous system becomes more sensitised to the pain messages from the body, meaning the pain felt is magnified.

What is the long- term outlook for a dog with arthritis?

Arthritis is a progressive disease which, if left untreated, will have a significant negative impact on your dog's quality of life. Without intervention, arthritis leads to a premature end of life for the affected dog. By identifying the disease earlier and pro-actively managing it, this end point can be substantially delayed.

What can I do to help my dog with arthritis?

To successfully manage arthritis, you need to be aware of the signs of discomfort your dog shows. These signs are often subtle, such as short-lived enthusiasm during exercise, scuffing of nails or pads when walking, moving with an arch in their back, difficulty getting up and laying down, or having

trouble toileting. By watching for these signs, you can tell whether the chosen management plan is working, or whether other options should be trialled or added. Please refer to our chronic pain indicator chart on page 24 for further information. This can be a useful tool to aid with monitoring your dog's response to any changes in management.

Since there is no cure for arthritis, all treatment options are aimed at managing the condition rather than fixing it. The level of management and the types of treatment required will change with time as the disease progresses.

No single management option will work optimally on its own to treat arthritis. For effective management, several treatment options should be used together. Some of these will require time and effort on your behalf, such as exercises to improve posture and muscle tone, changes to the normal daily walks and diet.

Through working with your vet and other professionals you can offer your dog the best opportunity of a comfortable life for as long as possible.

Multi-modal management

Managing this disease effectively involves attending to each of the following areas, as well as reassessing and adjusting your plan as required.

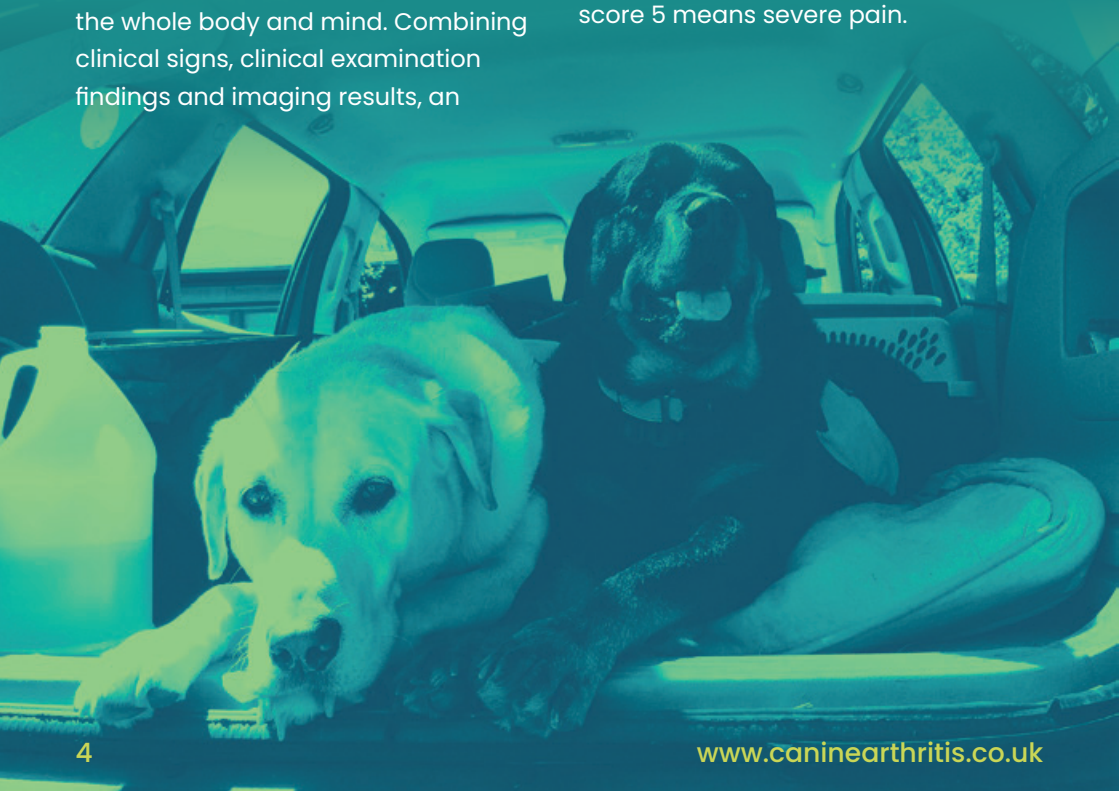
5x5x5 – THE CONCEPT

Through following staging, you can follow a structured protocol with your vet. This consists of STAGE 1 - Identification, STAGE 2 - Confirmation, STAGE 3 - Initial Treatment Plan, STAGE 4 - Reassessment and STAGE 5 - Palliative Care.

This approach encourages a complete diagnosis and clear direction, as well as ensuring good communication and realistic expectations.

Arthritis is a long term progressive disease, beginning with mild changes within the joint and ending in severe irreversible physical changes through the whole body and mind. Combining clinical signs, clinical examination findings and imaging results, an attempt can be made to grade the arthritis with grade 1 being early changes, and grade 5 being severe changes. Progression in veterinary medicine is opening new avenues of treatment that must be tailored to the grade.

The main clinical sign of arthritis is pain, and all treatment plans must prioritise controlling it. Through a simple scoring system, an attempt can be made to categorise the degree of pain we believe the dog is experiencing, as well as monitor the effectiveness of the chosen intervention. Score 1 is mild pain, and score 5 means severe pain.



STAGE 2 - CONFIRMATION

A suspicion that your dog has arthritis needs to be confirmed through a complete clinical examination and further investigations by your vet. Other conditions requiring different treatments with completely different outcomes can present with symptoms very similar to arthritis. Misdiagnosis can be costly on time, finances and the health of your dog.

A definitive diagnosis of arthritis in your dog requires the following steps:

1. Identify changes in energy levels, behaviour, gait and mobility
2. Consultation and full physical examination with your vet
3. X-rays or CT scan/joint fluid collection
4. Response to treatment on anti-inflammatory medication

Where has my dog got arthritis?

Clinical examination findings/list joints/list regions?

Radiography/CT findings?

THE MULTI-MODAL APPROACH

Multi-modal management is when more than one approach is used at the same time to get the best results. Conservative multi-modal management options are applied to all cases of arthritis, irrespective of whether they require surgery, or targeted approaches such as intra articular medications are used. Good body weight management, appropriate diet, an appropriate exercise routine, physical therapies and lifestyle changes are essential for any treatment plan to succeed.

Arthritis is a complicated disease with many different presentations and rates of progression depending on which joints are affected, the cause of the arthritis, and the lifestyle of the dog. Each dog is an individual.

Surgery is sometimes suggested to prevent, moderate, and in some cases, remove arthritis. Prior to considering whether surgical intervention is appropriate, your vet will develop a full clinical picture, complete with x-rays and sometimes CT or MRI scanning. No decisions can be made without a clear understanding of the condition.

Intra articular interventions are developing in veterinary management of arthritis in dogs. Stem cells, platelet rich plasma, hydro-gels and other substances are becoming more readily available but also require a thorough clinical work up prior to possible use. These therapies are currently not widely used.

MONITORING AND ADVICE

Monitoring is essential to the long term management of arthritis. It enables the creation of a tailored treatment plan. Below is an explanation of the areas that need to be observed, addressed and reconsidered frequently using the Stage 3 and Stage 4 forms on the following pages. These pages can be printed out multiple times as required from the download version of the booklet.

1. Overall Demeanour score: 1-10
This is your dog's average happiness level, 1/10 being the happiest they could be (like when they did not have arthritis), 10/10 being the least happy they could be.

2. Overall Mobility: 1-10
This is your dog's average mobility level, 1/10 being as mobile as could they be (without arthritis), 10/10 completely immobile.

3. Level of Pain: 1-5
This is your estimate of how much pain your dog is in. 0/5 being no pain, 5/5 the worst possible pain.

4-5. Current medication/Dose
Your dog's medication is likely to change as their arthritis changes.

6. Body Condition Scoring (BCS): 1-9
Excess body weight carriage will negatively affect your dog's arthritis and pain. Aim for a BCS of between 4-5/9.

7. Diet
Diet will influence your dog's body condition score.

8-9. Current supplement
Certain food supplements may have a beneficial effect on your dog's pain levels, mobility and demeanour.

10-11. Complementary therapy
Certain complementary therapies can be very effective at improving your dog's pain levels, mobility and demeanour.

12. Home management
House adaptations are very important to minimise further injury and progression of the disease, as well as improve your dog's quality of life.

13. Exercise management
Modifying and adapting your routine exercise/walks is very important to minimise further injury and progression of the disease, as well as improve your dog's quality of life.

STAGE 3 Initial treatment plan

1. Overall demeanour score /10

2. Overall mobility /10

3. Level of pain /5

4. Current medication(s)

Name	Dose

5. Medication/therapeutic plan adjustment advice

6. Body condition score (1-9) /9

7. Feeding advice

8. Current supplement

Name	Dose

9. Supplement advice

10. Current complementary therapy(ies)

Name	Frequency

11. Complementary therapy advice

12. Home management consideration

- ☐ Floors
- ☐ Steps
- ☐ Feeding station
- ☐ Stairs
- ☐ Bedding
- ☐ Outside

13. Exercise management consideration

- ☐ No. of times a day
- ☐ Terrain of each walk
- ☐ Games during walks
- ☐ Length of each walk
- ☐ Therapeutic exercises on walks
- ☐ Car transport

14. Vet advice

STAGE 4 Reassessment

1. Overall demeanour score

/10

2. Overall mobility

/10

3. Level of pain

/5

4. Current medication(s)

Name	Dose

5. Medication/therapeutic plan adjustment advice

6. Body condition score (1-9)

/9

7. Feeding advice

8. Current supplement

Name	Dose

9. Supplement advice

10. Current complementary therapy(ies)

Name	Frequency

11. Complementary therapy advice

12. Home management consideration

- ☐ Floors
- ☐ Steps
- ☐ Feeding station
- ☐ Stairs
- ☐ Bedding
- ☐ Outside

13. Exercise management consideration

- ☐ No. of times a day
- ☐ Terrain of each walk
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- ☐ Therapeutic exercises on walks
- ☐ Car transport

14. Vet advice

STAGE 4 Reassessment

1. Overall demeanour score

/10

2. Overall mobility

/10

3. Level of pain

/5

4. Current medication(s)

Name	Dose

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6. Body condition score (1-9)

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STAGE 4 Reassessment

1. Overall demeanour score /10

2. Overall mobility /10

3. Level of pain /5

4. Current medication(s)

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STAGE 4 Reassessment

1. Overall demeanour score /10

2. Overall mobility /10

3. Level of pain /5

4. Current medication(s)

Name	Dose

5. Medication/therapeutic plan adjustment advice

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- ☐ Car transport

14. Vet advice

DOG OWNERS CHECKLIST...

Use this guide to help you properly manage arthritis in your dog.

- [ ] Get veterinary confirmation of arthritis
- [ ] Ensure other health parameters are normal through blood and urine tests
- [ ] Confirm the dosing instructions of the medications prescribed
- [ ] Discuss body condition score of your dog and change diet accordingly
- [ ] Discuss lifestyle modifications and home adaptations necessary for your dog
- [ ] Confirm a reassessment date with your vet
- [ ] Fill in chronic pain indicator chart
- [ ] Video different activities in and out of the home for reference
- [ ] Trim fur between pads of all 4 feet and cut nails to minimise slipping
- [ ] Carry out a home inspection looking for slip and trip hazards and modify to minimise accidents (e.g. steps, stairs, door frames)
- [ ] Carry out a garden and drive inspection
- [ ] Identify and avoid walks with difficult terrain
- [ ] Be vigilant of how your dog is coping with exercise
- [ ] Consider whether a more supportive harness would be of greater benefit than a collar
- [ ] Ensure your dog can get in and out of the car without exertion and accidents, consider a ramp or step if they can't

- [ ] Monitor their feeding and drinking and raise the station to suit if required
- [ ] Check bedding is easily accessible and allows them to get a comfortable night sleep
- [ ] Start a supplement containing omega 3 fatty acids from a marine based source as these have been proven effective in clinical trials
- [ ] Research and consider other supplements
- [ ] Discuss adding a complementary therapy such as physiotherapy or hydrotherapy with a qualified therapist
- [ ] Discuss the benefits of a targeted exercise plan with your vet or therapist
- [ ] Consider interactive feeding toys such as a Kong to keep your dog mentally and physically stimulated
- [ ] Keep a diary of your dog's progress
- [ ] Use the Canine Arthritis Management resources to help you tailor your management plan

PRE-TREATMENT VALUES

Score Card: _____ Date: _____

Brief pain inventory
Validated lameness assessment tool from University of Pennsylvania

Description of pain (1= No Pain and 10=Extreme Pain)

1. Circle the number that best describes the pain at its **worst** in the last 7 days:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Circle the number that best describes the pain at its **least** in the last 7 days:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Circle the number that best describes the pain at its **average** in the last 7 days:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Circle the number that best describes the pain as it is **right now**:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Description of function (1= No interference and 10=Complete Interference)

Circle the number that describes how, during the past 7 days, pain has interfered with:

5. General activity:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. Enjoyment of life:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. Ability to rise to standing from laying down:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. Ability to walk:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. Ability to run:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. Ability to climb (e.g. up stairs or kerbs):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Overall impression (over last 7 days)

11. Circle the number that best describes your pet's overall quality of life issues:

1 Poor **2** Fair **3** Good **4** Very good **5** Excellent

Current treatments: _____

_____

Recommendations: _____

_____

POST-TREATMENT VALUES

Score Card: _____ Date: _____

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canine arthritis management

GOOD DAY/BAD DAY DIARY

Print this sheet off and simply keep a daily note of whether your dog had a good or a bad day. A good day could entail visual ease of movement, readiness to get up for a walk or a treat etc. Similarly a bad day could entail the opposite. If your pet appears to be having more bad days than good days then please do get in touch with your vet.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	NOTES			

Arthritis is more commonly seen in senior dogs and the progression of the disease and clinical signs of discomfort and immobility often influence questions on their quality of life. The signs associated with arthritis also naturally wax and wane which can confuse an owner's judgement of their individual situation.

The Good Day/Bad Day Diary is designed to add objectivity into assessing the general quality of our dog's life. This is not a validated method, simply an easy-to-use tool.

Please see www.vetmetrica.com for a helpful validated method on assessing your dog's health status (note, your vet must be registered with Vet Metrica before you can access it).

HOW TO USE THE KEY INDICATOR CHART

SESSION NUMBER AND DATE

Please fill in below which number session is being performed and the date. Then work horizontally.

CHECK WITH YOUR VET

CAM works with your vet and recommends regular interaction with them regarding your dog's complete health. Your vet will also need to see your dog regularly in order to be able to continue prescribing regular medications. In chronic disease states this is either every 3 or 6 months depending on the severity of the condition. CAM aims to remind their clients of this by suggesting routine consultations at their own vets after every 3 treatments.

OVERALL DEMEANOUR

This is a quality of life assessment. Chronic discomfort will affect mood and coping strategies, which may become apparent in your dog's level of happiness and sociability. This is very relevant when assessing whether a pain control regime is working. The higher the score the worse the situation. This system of measurement will allow data to be collated to study what management plans are effective and to then advise owners with further arthritic dogs.

OVERALL MOBILITY

Pain can be expressed in many different ways – limping is not the only way to tell if your dog is in pain. Owners can see that their dogs are walking differently, often with less enthusiasm, less agility, less grace and fluidity. This can be assessed by quantifying how far their mobility has deteriorated from when they were younger and more agile. The higher the score the worse the situation. This system of measurement will allow data to be collated to study what management plans are effective and to then advise owners with arthritic dogs.

IMPROVEMENT INDICATORS

Expressions of pain and discomfort will be unique to your dog. It may be that they don't want to climb stairs or hesitate before doing so, or it may be that they can't hold a squat anymore so they walk whilst toileting. Owners need to identify their own dog's indicators, and be able to recognise them easily so as to monitor whether they improve or deteriorate. This ensures treatment plans chosen are effective, and ensures we are not convincing ourselves we are doing the right thing when in fact they are deteriorating.

KEY INDICATOR CHART

Session number Date:	Overall Demeanour Out of 10 (10=severe)	Overall Mobility Out of 10 (10=severe)	Improvement Indicator 1
Check with your vet Date:	Take this sheet	Weigh your dog and make a note	Discuss your dog's drugs and dosage
Check with your vet Date:	Take this sheet	Weigh your dog and make a note	Discuss your dog's drugs and dosage

Animal name:

Grade out of 10:
10 being most severe

Address:

Improvement Indicator 2	Improvement Indicator 3	Improvement Indicator 4	Improvement Indicator 5
Check with your vet Date:	Take this sheet	Weigh your dog and make a note	Discuss your dog's drugs and dosage
Check with your vet Date:	Take this sheet	Weigh your dog and make a note	Discuss your dog's drugs and dosage

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPISTS FINDINGS

Name: _____

Professional Capacity (please tick all that apply)

☐ Vet ☐ Pain Clinic Vet ☐ Physiotherapist

☐ Hydrotherapist ☐ Myotherapist ☐ Other: _____

Company Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone No: _____

Patient Details:

Date: ☐ First appointment ☐ Continuation appointment

Key Findings (subjective and objective):

Treatment Given:

Treatment Plan:

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPISTS FINDINGS

Name: _____

Professional Capacity (please tick all that apply)

☐ Vet ☐ Pain Clinic Vet ☐ Physiotherapist

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Patient Details:

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Key Findings (subjective and objective):

_____

_____

_____

Treatment Given:

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_____

_____

Treatment Plan:

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_____

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPISTS FINDINGS

Name: _____

Professional Capacity (please tick all that apply)

☐ Vet ☐ Pain Clinic Vet ☐ Physiotherapist

☐ Hydrotherapist ☐ Myotherapist ☐ Other: _____

Company Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone No: _____

Patient Details:

Date: ☐ First appointment ☐ Continuation appointment

Key Findings (subjective and objective):

Treatment Given:

Treatment Plan:

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPISTS FINDINGS

Name: _____

Professional Capacity (please tick all that apply)

☐ Vet ☐ Pain Clinic Vet ☐ Physiotherapist

☐ Hydrotherapist ☐ Myotherapist ☐ Other: _____

Company Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone No: _____

Patient Details:

Date: ☐ First appointment ☐ Continuation appointment

Key Findings (subjective and objective):

_____

_____

_____

Treatment Given:

_____

_____

_____

Treatment Plan:

_____

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NOTES

NOTES

canine arthritis management

The intention of CAM is to provide resources to help change owners, vets and the public's perception of how to diagnose and treat chronic pain in animals, which will then lead to improved lives for the dogs and their owners.

Find out more online...

www.caninearthritis.co.uk

info@caninearthritis.co.uk

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