

"WE'RE GETTING A DOG FOR THE KIDS "

Kids and dogs, puppies and kids, all those cute images from dog food commercials and camera ads and old "Lassie" reruns. Ahh, the power of myth! Yes, it seems quite natural to think that children and dogs go together. I've heard it said hundreds of times that "we're thinking of getting a dog for the kids." For many prospective dog owners, it seems logical to assume that the dog will entertain the children, teach them a sense of responsibility, and be a willing and affectionate companion.



Well, if you're still in that starry-eyed thinking stage, stay there until the idea matures into the realization that you're bringing another living being into your home, and that this new family member deserves an unconditional and lifetime commitment. Be aware also that not every dog is an entertainer, a teacher, or even a willing companion. And to top it off, just like people, the new dog or puppy may take an instant dislike to one or all of your children!

Still with me? Great! It could very well be that getting a dog or puppy "for the kids" will still turn out to be the best thing you could do for your family. But understanding your dog's needs and your children's limitations is the key to getting off to a good start. Understand also that expecting a new dog to fill a void in a child's life caused by divorce or the death of a parent is expecting too much from a canine companion. Yes, it can work on rare occasion, but the odds are really against you.



While some people are instinctively good with animals, most of them are not. I have a gut feeling that the ones who are "good" with dogs somehow learned from the generation before them just how to live with a dog. Mom and Dad were probably there to supervise the interaction between dog and child from the start, and served as good role models in caring and coping with the new canine member of the family.

Similarly, you must anticipate doing the same for your children if this venture is to succeed. Assuming that you've done all the right things in searching for the kind of dog you want - reading up on breeds, visiting litters, talking with owners, etc. - and have picked out the dog of your dreams, bringing him home is the first important step in the process.

Bring the animal home when there's not a lot of commotion going on (Christmas, Easter, birthdays are not a good time for this!) Pick a time when you have a weekend at least or a few days off to spend lots of time with the kids and the dog. Start a feeding and exercise schedule for the dog, and stick with it. It isn't as important who does the chores for the dog as the fact that they get done with consistency. It may help to write the schedule down, stick it on the refrigerator door and check things off when the jobs are done.



Show your children how to play with the new dog. (We throw the ball 'for' the dog, and not 'at' the dog, Junior"). Dogs have very sharp hearing, and so keep the youthful squealing and yelling to a minimum. Show them how to pet the dog - easily, gently, with no tugging, scratching or pulling hair. Step in and stop the child who puts a "bone-crusher" hug on the new pet.

Teach your toddler that dog food is not human food, and to leave the dog dishes alone! Fido can get quite upset about competition from Junior at his food bowl, and ugly feelings can develop. Teach all your children not to hand-feed the dog. It's not good for the dog's diet, and it's certainly not appropriate and possibly dangerous if your toddler tries to mimic this on his own. Also, it might result in your dog being fed Play-Doh when you're not looking!

Remember, if you have very small children and decide to buy a very small, cute puppy, in six months Junior will still be about 25 pounds. Rover, on the other hand, could weigh upwards of sixty pounds, all wrapped up in a wiggly, rambunctious package that can make your toddler's first steps an obstacle course!

If you are truly committed to getting a dog for the family, keep in mind these three rules:

1. **Rationally consider the demands** of caring for a new pet while taking care of small children, and decide whether this is the right time for you to take on this extra responsibility.
2. **Supervise** all dog-and-child interactions so that both children and pet are protected.
3. **Teach by example**, and learn how to care for the dog. Let your children learn from a good role model.

ORTHOPEDIC PROBLEMS IN DOGS

by T. J. Dunn, Jr. DVM

This article appeared in
March, 2003, Dog World Magazine

Dogs are born to run. Well, most breeds, anyway. By looking at them, Bassets, for example, don't seem to be built for speed and agility. But in their hearts they, like all dogs, have an innate drive to run, jump, play and seek out new and interesting vistas! And in the process of their quest to cover ground as fast as possible, dogs do sustain orthopedic injuries very similar to human athletic injuries. An orthopedic injury refers to damage to the skeletal system or associated muscles, joints and ligaments.



Most at risk for orthopedic injuries are the Greyhounds and Coursing dogs, sled dogs, hunting dogs, security dogs and Search and Rescue dogs. But every veterinarian sees non-athletic housedogs with orthopedic difficulties. Orthopedic injuries to active dogs are an inevitable outcome of the high stress demanded of the body structures. In housedogs, orthopedic problems seem most often to have two common predisposing factors... the dog being overweight and the "weekend warrior". Any overweight dog will be excessively stressing bone, muscles, joints and ligaments while engaged in active physical exercise. Jumping over obstacles, playing Frisbee, or exuberant retrieving of far-flung tennis balls can test the limits of anatomical structures. When there is any question about a dog's weight, opt for keeping the dog slightly

thin rather than slightly heavy.

The "weekend warrior" runs a risk of orthopedic injury (even if not overweight) because of lack of conditioning in tendons, ligaments, muscles and joints. Especially in middle aged and older dogs, an infrequent 4-hour bout of vigorous exercise is less desirable than 8 thirty-minute play periods. Back pain, and even intervertebral disc prolapse that has an adverse impact on spinal cord function, can result in poorly conditioned dogs that are unaccustomed to long periods of physical activity. Try to keep your dog

physically fit by frequent (not necessarily long) periods of activity and you will help keep excess weight from sneaking up on your canine athlete, too!

YOUNG DOG PROBLEMS

Some orthopedic problems have developmental manifestations in young dogs and are not a result of stress or trauma. Everyone has heard of [Hip Dysplasia](#) where a multiple of factors result in abnormal hip joint tightness and architecture. A major orthopedic problem for dogs, it isn't the only disorder affecting a young dog's orthopedic health. Elbow Dysplasia is less common but may require surgery to repair. It includes four specific disorders: 1) Osteochondritis dissecans (OCD) of the humeral condyle in the elbow, 2) Fragmented medial coronoid process of the ulna (FCP), 3) Ununited anconeal process of the ulna (UAP), and 4) Abnormal matching of the joint surfaces within the elbow joint. These developmental lesions often do not show up until the dog approaches a year of age and their presence is often noted after bouts of exercise. The elbow joint is remarkably stable, but when anything does go wrong the dog always displays signs of discomfort. Limping and disuse places even greater stresses on opposite limbs, too. Many elbow problems, aggravated by physical activity, really have their origins in developmental aberrations that occurred as a puppy.



[Osteochondritis dissecans \(OCD\)](#) more often occurs in the head of the humerus within the shoulder joint. The flap of cartilage that lifts away from the humeral head creates havoc within the shoulder joint and nearly always requires surgery for its removal and eventual healing of the joint.

Luxating patellas commonly have hereditary influences that result in improperly formed joint surfaces and muscle and tendon tension angles. Dislocating (luxating) a patella from the groove in the front of the knee always creates discomfort and predisposes the joint to repeat episodes of dislocation and arthritis. Looseness of the patella often can be demonstrated in young dogs, well before they show signs of trouble. A chronic luxating patella will need surgical intervention to keep the dog active and vigorous.

LIGAMENTS AND CARTILAGE

Ligaments are bands of fibrous and slightly elastic tissue. They connect the bones of a joint and assist in stabilizing directional movement of the joint members. Collateral ligaments on the medial and lateral sides of the knee joint, for example, are rather notorious since human athletes often sustain damage to these structures. Certainly the most common serious orthopedic injury occurring in dogs is a torn [ACL \(Anterior Cruciate Ligament\)](#). There are two stabilizing ligaments that cross the knee joint that allow the joint to move only in a hinge-like fashion; but when the ACL is torn, the femur actually slides across the tibial surface and creates pain, inflammation and eventually a profound arthritis. Most ACL trauma occurs when a shearing force is exerted at the knee joint, such as when the dog attempts to stop rapidly. If the shearing force overcomes the strength of the ACL, stretching or complete tearing of the ligament results. In addition, cartilage damage can result. If at the time of an injury there are abnormal forces rotating the joint, supporting cartilage called the meniscus can be torn or loosened from its attachments. Time for surgery! (A new procedure for ACL repair is currently getting quite a bit of attention from veterinary surgeons.



Called the [Tibial Plateau Leveling Osteotomy](#), the technique is actually patented! Special training is needed to perform this method of correcting a torn ACL.)

MUSCLE AND TENDONS

When muscle fibers tear, called a strained muscle, healing usually takes place within two weeks if the dog is rested. Tendons are remarkably resistant to mechanical stresses and generally an associated muscle or bony attachment will fail before a tendon will separate. But torn tendons do occur, more often due to trauma such as a laceration than to exercise overload. A torn Achilles tendon behind the hock, an injury more common in dogs that jump vigorously or pull heavy loads, can be a seriously debilitating injury. Depending upon the severity of the torn or stretched tendon either rest or surgery will be required. Tendonitis refers to inflammation and irritation of a tendon. It creates pain and commonly occurs in the shoulder joint of dogs that are raced vigorously. Tendonitis often has obscure identifying signs but with anti-inflammatory medications and rest, irritated tendons and tendon sheaths will heal well. If you expect your dog to be pulling a cart or sled, be sure to do gradual increments of resistance to insure against muscle or tendon injuries.

BACK TROUBLE

Spinal muscles, tendons, and joint structures accept an inordinate amount of physical stress. Twisting, flexing, extending, absorbing compressive forces and yet remaining flexible in spite of these stressors places a huge demand on the spinal column's members. Muscles of the back can suffer from strains but



fortunately do heal rapidly. When an intervertebral disc is compressed, however, encroachment and inflammation of nerve roots can result in persistent and debilitating pain and mobility restrictions. Trauma or degenerative forces affect the intervertebral disc and can allow disc material to protrude into the spinal canal. If the situation progresses, spinal cord function may be compromised and partial or even complete paralysis of the hind limbs occurs.

FRACTURES

Most cases of [fractured bones](#) happen because of direct trauma to the structure rather than from stresses induced by muscle contraction. Broken toes and limbs often occur due to impact injuries and spiral fractures of long bones can happen

when a torsion stress impacts the bone. In some lucky (!) situations where the bone fragments are stable and are aligned well, simple splinting and confinement may be all that is required for the slow process of bone healing to occur. In other injuries, internal fixation with pins, wires, plates, screws and bands may be needed to realign and stabilize the fragments. In ideal situations, even severely fractured bones can heal well within six weeks.

PHYSICAL THERAPY

Unfortunately, this vital aspect of the comprehensive treatment of canine orthopedic problems has been often overlooked. In the textbook CANINE SPORTS MEDICINE AND SURGERY, by Bloomberg, Dee and Taylor, published by W. B. Saunders, 1998 edition, there is an entire chapter on physical therapy covering such modalities as heat/cold applications, electrical stimulation, ultrasound, electromagnetic therapy, cold laser, massage and exercise. Properly applied physical therapy will minimize musculoskeletal disability, shorten the healing time and assist in restoring normal function. Any patient, whether or not it is considered a canine athlete, should receive the benefits of physical therapy after an orthopedic injury.

Fortunately there are [veterinary specialists in orthopedic surgery](#) whose advanced training will come to the rescue when we general practitioners encounter a complicated and challenging orthopedic problem. They are experts in getting even Bassets back on the trail!

Mammary Gland Tumor	What Is Hip Dysplasia	Hematoma Surgery	Intestinal Foreign Body	Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome of
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Melanoma Tumor In A Dog



Melanoma tumors in dogs, more than most cancers, demand immediate attention. As a group, melanomas can be either benign or malignant. Early recognition of melanomas can lead to more successful attempts at removal and identification of the grade or stage of cancer. The risk of metastasis for benign forms of melanoma is not very high but these can be locally invasive. Malignant melanomas can metastasize (spread) to any area of the body especially the lymph nodes and lungs and present very challenging and dangerous prospects for the dog. Cats seem much less susceptible to melanoma tumors than dogs.

Some dog breeds are more at risk for melanomas such as those below:			
Airedales	Boston Terrier	Boxer	Chihuahua
Chow Chow	Cocker Spaniel	Doberman	Golden Retriever
Irish Setter	Miniature Schnauzer	Scottish Terrier	Springer Spaniel

BENIGN MELANOMAS...

Benign cutaneous melanomas of dogs are usually seen as round, firm, raised, darkly pigmented masses from one-quarter to 2 inches in diameter. They occur most often on the head, digits or back.

MALIGNANT MELANOMAS...

In the dog, presence of malignant melanoma may be first discovered in the lungs where diffuse pulmonary infiltration of tumors will be displayed throughout the lung tissue on a radiograph (x-ray). Lymph node swelling or enlargement may be a clinical sign of malignant spread of a melanoma. Some melanomas do not display the characteristic darkly pigmented color of most melanomas. The pigment called melanin is a hallmark of these tumors and usually is present in large amounts in melanomas.

DIAGNOSIS...

A definitive diagnosis is made via microscopic analysis (histopathology evaluation by a Specialist in Veterinary Pathology) of a small section of the growth. This is called a "biopsy" of the tumor. The examining pathologist usually will grade the specimen according to how actively the cells are replicating. This gives an approximation of how likely the growth is to invade and spread. If an entire growth is removed, the pathologist can report on the tissue's grade as well as any evidence that parts of the tumor may not have been thoroughly excised by the surgeon.

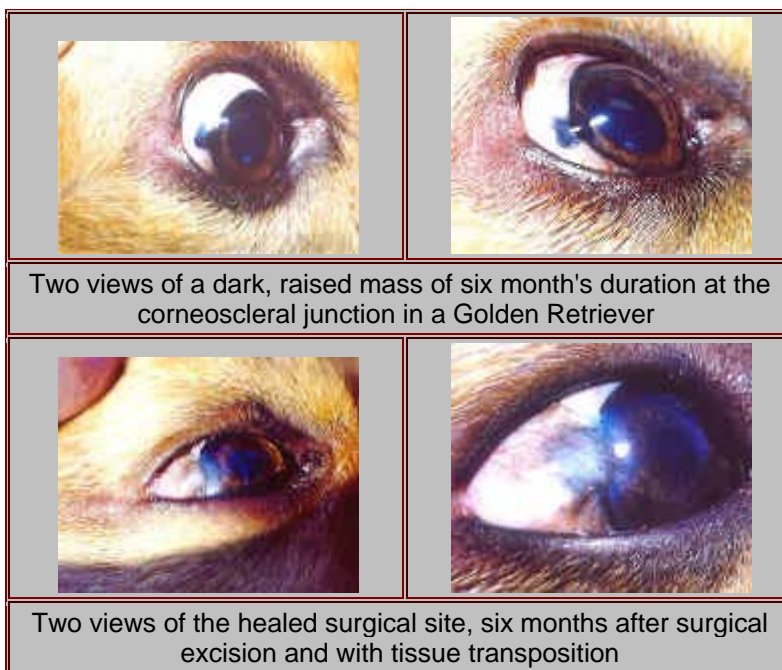
TREATMENT...

Treatment of melanomas is best provided by surgical excision of the tumor and nearby surrounding tissue. Localized tumors may be completely removed and the patient cured. However, if a malignant melanoma has had the opportunity to spread to distant areas of the body, long term survival of the dog is not likely. Chemotherapy has been performed with marginal success; complete remissions of metastatic melanoma cases are rare. Fortunately most cutaneous (skin) melanomas are benign, but individual growths need to be evaluated as unique and unpredictable since any given melanoma may become malignant.

Case Presentation:

A Golden Retriever was presented for routine vaccinations. The attending veterinarian, as part of the pre-vaccination physical exam, noticed an abnormal, darkly pigmented, raised tissue mass at the lateral edge or the dog's right corneal-scleral junction. The suspicious mass was creating a slight deviation in the smooth surface of the cornea and seemed to be invading both the sclera (white area of the eye ball) and the cornea. Because the veterinarian suspected the mass was a melanoma, referral to a specialist in Veterinary Ophthalmology was done. Dr. Sam Vainisi of the Animal Eye Clinic in Denmark, Wisconsin, evaluated the four-year-old Golden Retriever and suggested that surgery be done. Using a CO2 laser the growth was excised. Because of the depth and diameter of the growth, as well as the unusual location, Dr. Vainisi performed a frozen tissue, corneal-scleral graft with healthy tissue from the clinic's eye bank to fill in the defect. The tissue graft was carefully sutured into the surgical site. Topical and oral antibiotics and an anti-inflammatory medication were used after the surgery and healing of the surgical site was uneventful. The photos below display the melanoma prior to the surgery and six months after. Annie, the patient, is healthy and active and is expected to have no visual impairment as a consequence of the tumor. Thanks to the specialist's careful evaluation and surgical excision of this melanoma, Annie is expected to have no further problems with the eye.

BENIGN MELANOMA OF THE EYE IN A DOG
(click on an image to see close-up view)



Two views of a dark, raised mass of six month's duration at the corneoscleral junction in a Golden Retriever

Two views of the healed surgical site, six months after surgical excision and with tissue transposition

If you discover a darkly pigmented, raised, thickened growth anywhere on your dog, be sure to have your veterinarian evaluate it. Keep in mind that pigmented (black) areas of the skin are common in dogs and cats, especially in the tongue, gum and eyelid tissues... and these darkened areas may be completely normal for that individual. However, if any darkly pigmented areas are actually raised above the normal surface or seem thickened or ulcerated or inflamed, an exam is indicated.

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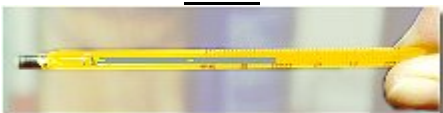
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EAR MITES IN CATS AND DOGS

Ear mites in cats are one of the most commonly seen veterinary health care problems. Treating ear mites in cats has finally become a relatively easy experience now that veterinarians can prescribe safe and effective medications that do not require applications every day for weeks. Caused by a little mite called *Otodectes cynotis*, the mites generally live along the surface of the ear canal, but can also be found on other areas of the body or in the environment. These mites can, but seldom do, infest humans. If present for long periods, they can lead to serious ear difficulties in cats and dogs.



As **ear mites** move about and feed along the **cat or dog's ear** canal they create substantial irritation and subsequent inflammation. The mites feed on tissue debris and secretions from the ear canal lining. With repeated irritation, the ear canal thickens and debris builds up within the ear canal. This debris, caused by mite waste products, dead tissue and fluid resembles coffee grounds. In chronic (long term) cases of ear mites in cats and dogs, there often is secondary bacterial and yeast infections present that complicate the treatment and create even more stress on the animal.

Generally, ear mites do not break the ear drum. However, in the presence of infection and with severe enough affliction with ear mites, the ear drum can be penetrated. When this occurs, a very severe middle ear disorder can result where the animal can lose balance, become disoriented and have severe physical signs of trouble.

Ear mites in a cat: Click on a small image below to view a close-up view in a new window



Coffee grounds appearance to debris created by ear mites



Another view of an infested ear canal of a cat



A Q-tip can swab the ear canal for debris and attached mites



Mites can easily be seen under the microscope



Applying Acarexx to the ear canal of a cat



Acarexx is only one of a number of products used to eliminate ear mites



The image above is a close-up of an otoscope speculum after an examination of an infested ear canal

LIFE CYCLE

The ear mite life cycle, which takes about twenty-one days from egg to adult, entails going through four different stages:

Stage 1: The Eggs

Female ear mites usually lay about 5 eggs daily during their entire adult life. Deposited on the surface lining of the ear canal, the eggs hatch within 4 days.



Stage 2: The Larvae

Once hatched from the eggs, the larvae feed for 4 days then rest for 24 hours as they molt into the nymphal phase.

Stage 3: The Nymphs

Two stages of nymphs are recognized. Each feeds for 3 to 5 days and then rests and then molts to the next stage.



Stage 4: The Adults

Just barely visible to the naked eye, the adult ear mite appears white in color and feeds off the epithelial debris in the cat's ear. There can be literally thousands of mites crawling about the ear canal and external ear surfaces. Ear mites do not burrow into the skin as Sarcoptic Mites and Demodex Mites do. They are communicable from one animal to another by direct contact.

SIGNS OF EAR MITES IN CATS AND DOGS

- * Head shaking
- * Scratching the ears (there may be sores around the ears as a result of scratching)
- * Reddish-brown to black discharge (crusts and cerumen) in the ears that resemble coffee grounds
- * Sometimes there seem to be no observable signs of ear mites



DIAGNOSIS OF EAR MITES

A diagnosis of ear mites by the veterinarian is usually made by one of the following methods:

- * Direct visualization of the mites with an otoscope
- * Microscopic examination of the ear discharge

Although some cats show no outward signs of ear mite infestations, the mites can be diagnosed as described above. In most cats with ear mites if you briskly rub the ear canal area the cat will respond by automatic scratching movements of the back leg. Triggering this automatic scratching movement seldom occurs in cats that do not have ear mites. Veterinarians check for ear mites as part of the routine physical exam, especially in multi-cat households.



TREATMENT: There are a number of medications used to treat ear mites in cats. Your veterinarian will prescribe an effective product. One study showed that treatment with ACAREXX was 92% effective in treating adult ear mite (*Otodectes cynotis*) infestations after 7 days. In a well-controlled clinical field trial, one treatment of ACAREXX was 94% effective in clearing cats and kittens of adult ear mite infestations within 7 to 10 days. Your veterinarian may prescribe a different method or different medication such as Tresaderm liquid; be sure to have a follow-up exam done four weeks after you think all the mites are gone.

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