



CAYMAN ANIMAL HOSPITAL

Back Problems in Dogs

An animal that has trouble going up or down the stairs, can't jump up on the furniture, and/or seems to be in constant pain may have a back problem.

Disk problems are the most common back problems in dogs. The disk functions as a shock absorber between the vertebrae, commonly known as the bones of the back.

When these disks are injured or degenerate, they put pressure on the nerves, creating a "pinched nerve." Aside from a pinched nerve, the injury can interfere with nerve impulses that are sent down the spinal cord. Without a complete functioning nervous system, advanced cases can cause a wobbly gait, leading to paralysis in the hind limbs.

Dogs with short legs and long bodies are most affected by disk problems. Commonly affected breeds include dachshunds and basset hounds.



Early detection is very important in the treatment of back problems. As soon as a problem is noticed, strict rest is recommended. Unlike humans, dogs don't lie on their backs and certainly don't do very well in traction. Strict rest, and particularly no jumping, is best for the animal.

In more pronounced cases, your veterinarian may recommend surgery in order to remove the affected disk. The earlier the surgical procedure is done, the higher its success rate. Back injuries in dogs are like spinal cord injuries in people. Once paralysis sets in, the success rate declines rapidly.

Early detection and a veterinary examination are essential for quick recovery from a back injury. Depending upon the severity of the injury, most dogs recover quite well with medication, rest and lots of TLC. Dogs that have more complicated injuries may be candidates for more complicated back surgery.

Modern veterinary medicine ... Old fashioned care