

# Arthritis & Spondylosis

Owner information sheet





Arthritis means inflammation of the joints, and is a very common condition in our companion animals. It is also known as osteoarthritis (OA) or degenerative joint disease (DJD) and is a common cause of chronic pain. It is a disease that is managed, not cured. Due to its nature, arthritis does worsen over time. Your pet can be born with a condition that predisposes them to arthritis, or can be acquired over time.

Common clinical signs of arthritis include: lameness, alerted movement, muscle loss, pain, swollen joints, etc. However, many pets will sometimes show few or no signs, often owners report a 'slowing down', which can be mistaken for just an age related change.

Spondylosis is sometimes referred to as "arthritis of the spine" but it is in fact a different condition. Spondylosis refers to spurs of bone that develop on the edges of the vertebrae in the spine. This happens when the intervertebral discs between the bones start to degenerate with age and the spine becomes less stable. The spurs form to help stabilise the spine by reducing movement, so affected animals may appear stiffer/less flexible. They can become quite large and sometimes "bridge" together causing the vertebrae to fuse so movement is much more restricted. Unlike arthritis, spondylosis is not an inflammatory condition, so whilst it sometimes causes pain it is more often an incidental finding in an older animal being x-rayed for other problems. If a bone spur develops near a nerve and presses on the nerve it can cause pain and/or lameness. Spondylosis is a progressive condition so an animal that initially presents as comfortable can go on to develop back pain. Those cases may present in a similar way to arthritis cases and will need to be examined by your vet as they might need pain relief.

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MY RESCUE ANIMAL AND ME?

Your pet has been diagnosed through joint examination and x-rays as having arthritis and/or spondylosis. Our team of vets consider your pet's arthritis/spondylosis to be at an early enough stage to enable rehoming whilst maintaining a good quality of life. Close monitoring, alongside your own vet, should enable your animal to live a comfortable life to its fullest. Regular appointments at your own veterinary surgery will be required especially if any of the above clinical signs start/worsen. It is important to remember that arthritis/spondylosis can only be managed, not cured. It may be that further x-rays are required and possibly joint supplementation, weight loss, long-term pain medication and blood tests. Any other treatment modalities can be discussed with your own vet. There will likely be insurance exclusions on any policy you take out and these should be clarified with your chosen insurance provider prior to homing.