

Expert information on medicine, behavior, and health in collaboration with a world leader in veterinary medicine

THIS JUST IN

Clevor for Dogs

It induces vomiting

Clevor (ropinirole ophthalmic solution), a prescription drug for inducing vomiting in dogs, such as for when a dog ate something poisonous or can't pass something through its intestinal tract, has received FDA approval. Clevor is a dopamine agonist administered by drops in the dog's eye.

In a clinical field study, 95 percent of dogs treated with Clevor vomited within 30 minutes. Most dogs vomited after the first dose; 14% needed a second dose 20 minutes after the first dose.

Adverse reactions were those most commonly seen with drugs in the dopamine agonist class (tremors, lethargy, increased heart rate) and typically resolved within six hours after dosing. Other drug-related effects include eye redness, involuntary blinking or spasms of the eye lid, eye discharge, eye swelling, visible third eyelid, drooping or falling of the upper eyelid, and corneal ulceration.

Human exposure to this drug may cause adverse reactions such as headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, decrease in blood pressure (orthostatic hypotension), and sleepiness, and you should seek medical attention if accidental exposure occurs. ■



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Research: CBD Improves Arthritis

Dogs had decreased pain and increased mobility

A team led by researchers at the Baylor College of Medicine conducted the first scientific studies to assess the potential therapeutic effects of cannabidiol (CBD) for arthritic pain in dogs. The researchers used dogs because canine arthritis closely mimics the characteristics of human arthritis.

Published in the journal *PAIN* and in *The Journal of Immunology*, the study first showed in laboratory tests and mouse models that CBD, a non-addictive product derived from hemp (cannabis), can significantly reduce the production of inflammatory molecules and immune cells associated with arthritis. Subsequently, this study showed that in arthritic dogs, CBD treatment significantly improved quality of life.

Large-Dog Study

The 20 large dogs in the study were assigned to one of four groups: a low dose, a high dose, a liposomal dose, and a placebo. The liposomal dose was included to see if the liposomes made the CBD more bioavailable. Liposomes are artificially formed tiny spherical sacs that are used to deliver drugs and other substances into the tissues at higher rates of absorption.

The dogs in the study took their assigned dose for four weeks. An evaluation was done by owners and the dogs' veterinarians both at the start of the study and at the end. Neither owners nor veterinarians knew which treatment the individual dogs were getting.

CBD significantly decreased pain and increased mobility in a dose-dependent

fashion among animals with an affirmative diagnosis of osteoarthritis. Liposomal CBD (20 mg/day) was as effective as the highest dose of non-liposomal CBD (50 mg/day) in improving clinical outcomes, according to the study.



Your old friend wants to go along with you no matter what, but talk with your vet before using CBD.

Results

The dogs in the two upper-dose groups all showed increased mobility and comfort with decreased inflammation. The dogs who had shown improvement held that improvement for a couple of weeks after the study ended.

The dogs' complete blood count and blood indicators of liver

and kidney function were evaluated before and after the four weeks of treatment. The researchers determined that the effect was quicker and more effective when CBD was delivered encapsulated in liposomes.

No alterations were found in the blood markers measured by the researchers, suggesting that, under the conditions of the study, the treatment seems to be safe.

CBD is not without some side effects, however. Some dogs will show elevations in liver enzymes and others may show gastrointestinal side effects such as vomiting or diarrhea. CBD may also interfere with the metabolism of other drugs. Since senior dogs tend to be the ones with arthritis, and many of those dogs will have other health problems, it is important to discuss using any CBD product with your veterinarian. ■

Verrico, C.D., et al. A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study of daily cannabidiol for the treatment of canine osteoarthritis pain. *Pain*, 2020.

New Hope for Dogs with DM

Lasers may help with degenerative myelopathy

Degenerative myelopathy (DM) is a frustrating, progressive disease of the spinal cord. It's similar to amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), or Lou Gehrig's disease, and there's no way to stop the progressive loss of mobility. Eventually, it leads in respiratory failure.

A recent study published in *Photobiomodulation, Photomedicine, and Laser Surgery* evaluated using laser therapy (photobiomodulation) in conjunction with traditional rehabilitation treatments to treat DM. This was a retrospective study looking back at cases of dogs with DM who were treated with laser and rehabilitation techniques to assess the outcomes with the combined therapy.

Twenty dogs who had been referred to a rehabilitation specialty clinic met the criteria for the study. Two different laser protocols were used. According to reports, six patients were treated using 904nm, 0.5W/cm² at the skin surface, 8J/cm² per point and were assigned to the PTCL-A group. The remaining 14 patients were treated using 980nm, 1.2-2.4 W/cm² at the skin surface, 14-21 J/cm² over the entire treatment area and were assigned to the PTCL-B group. Dogs in both groups received identical in-clinic rehabilitation therapy and at-home care instructions.

The protocol B dogs had greatly improved success, when measured in terms of time from onset of their symptoms to non-ambulatory paresis (NAP) or paralysis and for onset of symptoms to euthanasia. Dogs with protocol A averaged close to nine months before NAP, while dogs on protocol B averaged almost 32 months. From onset to euthanasia, dogs treated with protocol B gained about 38 months, while with protocol A dogs added about 11 months.

The authors felt this was most likely due to actions of the laser on the spinal cord in the dogs on protocol B. Obviously, more work needs to be done on this protocol, but any improvements for dogs with DM also may help people with ALS. ■

Miller, LA, et al. *Photobiomodulation, Photomedicine, and Laser Surgery*. Apr 2020. 195-205. <https://doi.org/10.1089/photob.2019.4723>



CDC Strengthens COVID-19 Precautions

Daily monitoring replaces two-week quarantine

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) increased recommendations for pet facilities during the pandemic, adding the suggestion to establish an animal-health and disease-management plan specific to the facility, monitoring animals in the facility daily for signs of illness, and separating sick animals. They enhanced precautions for introducing new animals to a facility. These replace the previous recommendation to use a two-week quarantine. ■

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/animals/pet-store.html>

Best Dog-Food Sites

Online help for choosing the right dog food

Choosing a dog food isn't always easy, but we found reliable websites that offer information that makes things just a little easier:

- ▶ **Cummings Veterinary Medical Center** at Tufts University calculates your dog food cost by using how many kilocalories a day your pet needs and what is provided by the food you are using. <https://tinyurl.com/food-cost>
- ▶ **Pet Nutrition Alliance** has information on manufacturers, such as whether they employ a nutritionist and if they own their manufacturing plant. <https://tinyurl.com/mfg-background>
- ▶ **World Small Animal Veterinary Association** addresses quality-control measures for "complete and balanced" foods. <https://tinyurl.com/complete-balanced> ■



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Training Stay vs. Wait

Use different verbal cues for different behaviors

Holding still and remaining in one place is an extremely useful skill for most dogs to do on command.

Because dogs don't generalize as easily as humans do, it is best to be very specific about your criteria for every verbal cue that you use. If you are consistent, your dog will learn what you expect her to do and can be successful.

We tend to use two primary variations of holding still frequently with our dogs:

Wait: This means hold back temporarily and then releasing. This is usually for situations like asking the dog to stay back while you maneuver grocery bags through the door or allowing you to open her crate door all the way before she blasts out. It doesn't matter what position she is in, and it won't last long.

Stay: This means hold a position until you return or release. This is usually for situations like sitting out of the way while guests enter the house, or staying while you cross the street to get the mail. Your dog is supposed to stay exactly where you left her and hold that position without moving until you return.

Kate Basedow, LVT, has been training dogs and competing in a variety of dog sports for over 20 years. To differentiate between these situations and her criteria for them, she always uses two different verbal cues:

"For my dogs, 'wait' means stay where you are temporarily and wait for further instructions. In competitions, I might use 'wait' for the start of an agility run where I want to get ahead of the dog a bit, or when I leave her to do a recall in obedience. At home, I use 'wait' so that my younger dog doesn't knock over the senior going out the door, when I am lowering a food bowl to the floor, or when I am picking up poop. 'Wait' is a temporary pause where my dog can expect a release or another command very soon," says Basedow.

"'Stay' means the dog should settle in and wait for me to come back to her," says Basedow. "At some levels of obedience trials, there are stay exercises where the dog needs to hold a position (usually sit or down) while the handler walks away. In day-to-day life, I use 'stay' for situations where I want it clear to my dog that she is to wait for me to come back. This might be while I grab the mail

to keep her away from the road, or at mealtimes if they are being a nuisance."

By teaching your dog the two separate cues, she will know that "wait" means she should still pay attention to what you say next, while "stay" means she can just settle in until you return. "The exact words you use don't matter," says Basedow. "You can use whatever verbal cue(s) you want, as long as they make sense to you and your dog knows what you mean by each one. I just happen to use 'stay' as my more robust stay command, whereas 'wait' is a more transient behavior."

Don't Forget the Release Word

One piece that many dog owners forget when trying to teach their dogs to stay/wait is to also teach them a release word. "She needs to know when she's allowed to move again!" says Basedow. Some commonly used release words are "okay," "break," and "free." Saying your release word in an excited, up-beat tone is an extra signal to your dog that she has done a good job and can move around again.

Starting Training

Training for both stay and wait starts the same. Wait until your dog is still (or put her in a sit or down), wait a second or two (keeping the time short to guarantee that she stays still), then calmly praise and reward. Repeat several times, gradually increasing the length of time. Keep praise calm, so that she doesn't get overexcited and more likely to break her position.

When you have done this little game several times, start to say, "Good stay," when you praise and reward. You can start working your cue in at the beginning of the stay as well, and introduce a hand signal (such as your hand held flat in a "stop" signal).

When your dog is able to hold position for several seconds, you can start adding distance. Ask her to stay, take one step back, then return to her and praise and reward. Gradually increase how far you go before coming back. If she breaks

her stay and gets up, calmly lead her back to where she was supposed to be and try again. She is learning, so corrections or scolding won't be productive.

What about that release word? Work that in when you have done several reps and either are done training or sense that your dog needs a break. When you return and praise, say your release word in an excited voice and jump back to encourage her to get up and follow you. Pet her and have a little fun. If you want to continue practicing stay, just set her back up and resume after you're congratulated her for a good job.

As you start doing longer stays and/or walking farther away, you can use your release word every time after you return.

To introduce "wait," set your dog up and use your same hand signal, but say, "Wait," instead of, "Stay." Then when you have gotten a few steps away, use your release word in an excited voice to encourage her to get up and come to you. Gradually increase the distance and time. If your dog cheats and gets up before you give her the release word, calmly take her back and try again.

It is often beneficial to practice both stay and wait within the same session, especially if your dog gets really excited about the release word. You don't want her to forget that "stay" means you will come back to her.

In the Real World

Don't forget to practice stay and wait in the real-life situations where you will use them. Train in different areas of your house and yard, then go to more exciting places such as parks or dog-friendly stores. Expect that your dog will have some trouble in a new environment with distractions, so she will need some extra help at first. ■



The most common hand signal for telling a dog to stay is the "stop" signal.

Canine Patellar Luxation

Most cases are congenital but surgery can help

Patellar luxation is a dislocation of the knee, which is located at the front of the hind leg, basically in line with his abdomen. This joint is sometimes also referred to as the stifle. You may hear a luxating patella referred to as a slipped patella, tricky knee, or dislocated knee cap. A dog with patellar luxation will walk oddly, without fully using one of his hind legs. Mild cases usually aren't painful. The dog may seem normal much of the time.

The luxation may be caused by an injury or obesity (which puts too much weight on the joint), but most cases are believed to be genetic (see sidebar, "Likely a Genetic Fault").

Patellar luxation is not an isolated problem. A knee that has slipped out of place can affect the entire rear leg, even into the hip. The good news is that if it's caught early enough, surgical intervention can help.

All About the Joint

The patella is a sesamoid bone. Sesamoids are bones imbedded in tendons to provide mechanical leverage, stability, and smooth motion. The patellae are the largest sesamoid bones in your dog's body and part of a major weight-bearing complex that helps transfer large forces through a wide range of motion.

The dog's knee is an integral part of the quadriceps complex (muscle, tendon, sesamoid, and ligament, connecting the



Most dogs go on to live normal lives after their knee surgery.

femur and tibia). The patella sits near the end of the femur, nestled in the trochlear groove within the femur. It is the patella in the groove that keeps the joint moving smoothly. The patellar ligament, which attaches the patella to the tibia, allows for easy extension of the stifle.

In cases of patellar luxations, the patella slips sideways out of the groove. The luxation can be medial (to the inside of the stifle joint) or lateral (to the outside). Medial luxations are more common in small dogs, while lateral luxations are more likely in large to giant breed dogs.

About 50% of cases of patellar luxation are bilateral. Many patellar luxations are due to congenital or developmental misalignments of the entire extensor mechanism, which means it's really not just a knee problem but an overall misalignment of the limb. Many affected dogs show some degree of hip abnormalities as well.

Your veterinarian will manipulate the stifle joint as well as watch your dog stand naturally and move. Radiographs or ultrasound may be used to confirm the bony changes, look for early signs of arthritis, and evaluate the joint.

"Patients with luxating patellas need to be evaluated by a surgeon or sports medicine specialist. The degree of luxation and the discomfort and dysfunction of the pet help determine which are surgical candidates. For those who do not yet require surgical correction, there is physical rehabilitation we recommend, and we have seen good results following compliance. Exercises aim to improve quadriceps strength to help better track the patella as well as improve spatial awareness and work on fine motion control/stability. Results may take up to two months to notice and require some degree of maintenance for life or until surgical intervention is warranted," says Christopher W. Frye DVM, DACVSMR, CVA, Assistant Clinical Professor and Section Chief, Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation at Cornell University Hospital for Animals.

Treatment Options

Weight control is usually part of a medical therapy plan along with the rehabilitation exercises to enhance the quadriceps mechanism. Massage, use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications, and hydrotherapy may all be combined in a comprehensive treatment plan.

Dogs with advanced luxations will require surgery to regain normal movement and alleviate pain. The goal

Breed Connection

Medial patellar luxations have a breed predisposition in Boston and Yorkshire Terriers, Chihuahuas, Pomeranians, Maltese, French Bulldogs, Pugs, Bichons Frises, Lhasa Apsos, Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Jack Russell Terriers, Shih Tzu, and Miniature and Toy Poodles.

Lateral luxations are at least partly genetic in Chinese Shar Pei, Flat-Coated Retrievers, Akitas, Great Pyrenees, Great Danes, St. Bernards, and Irish Wolfhounds.

Female dogs have a slightly greater risk, as do neutered/spayed dogs.

Grading the Luxation

In Orthopedic Foundation for Animals evaluations, luxating patellas are given a "grade." Grades 1 and 2 are the mildest, cases where dogs can often "fix" their luxation themselves by extending their legs. They will skip but have some normal movement between. When running, the dog may not use the affected leg at all. In Grades 3 and 4, dogs are more lame and progress more rapidly to arthritis. Dogs with medial luxations will often stand bowlegged and transfer most of their weight onto their front limbs.

Grade 1 – Patella can be manually luxated but returns to normal when released.

Grade 2 – Patella luxates with stifle flexion or on manual manipulation and remains luxated until stifle extension or manual replacement occurs.

Grade 3 – Patella is luxated continually and can be manually replaced but will reluxate spontaneously when manual pressure is removed.

Grade 4 – Patella luxated continually and cannot be manually replaced.

What You Will See

Dogs with a luxating patella will often seem to skip when they move. The funky step(s) are often followed by the dog stretching out the leg or shaking it, which seems to shift the patella back into place, especially with mild cases. Dogs with severe cases will have more bouts of abnormal movement.

Along with movement abnormalities, many dogs will show an abnormal stance. Puppies may have a bow-legged rear-leg stance that worsens as they grow. Large-breed dogs may have a knock-knee appearance.

With lateral luxations, dogs tend to be bilaterally affected and show more abnormalities in movement. A knock-knee stance and a twisting of the leg as the dog moves are usually noticed by 5 to 6 months of age.

of surgery is to restore normal alignment of the quadriceps muscle relative to the entire limb. Surgical techniques might require reshaping bones, reconstructing soft tissues, or a combination approach. Each dog (and in some cases, each leg, if a dog is affected bilaterally) needs to be individually evaluated for the best treatment plan.

Surgical treatments for patellar luxations include:

- ▶ Reconstruction of soft tissues surrounding the patella to loosen the side toward which the patella is riding and tighten the opposite side. Soft-tissue adjustments alone are not sufficient to restore normal movement in most dogs. These techniques are generally done as an adjunct to one of the bony corrective surgeries.
- ▶ Deepening the femoral groove so that the patella can seat deeply in its normal position.
- ▶ Transposing the tibial crest, the bony prominence onto which the tendon of the patella attaches below the knee. This will help realign the quadriceps, the patella, and its tendon. Bone heals faster than tendons, so transposing the bone leads to a faster return to mobility.
- ▶ Correction of abnormally shaped femurs is occasionally required in cases where an abnormal shape of the femur angles the patella to luxate

most of the time. This procedure involves cutting the bone, correcting its deformity, and immobilizing it with a bone plate.

- ▶ Using a Ridgestop implant, which is a curved plate that is surgically added to the bone on the inside of the stifle. By adding height, it helps to prevent a medial luxation of the patella. This may be sufficient for lower grades of luxation or it may be added to one of the other techniques for higher grade problems.

If both of your dog's legs are affected, some surgeons will operate on both at once, while others will advise you to do one leg, let it heal, and then do the other. This decision depends on the age and condition of your dog, along with the grade of your dog's luxation. According to Embrace Insurance, the surgery costs \$1,500 to \$3,000 per affected knee.

"The type of surgery performed is dependent on many patient-specific factors but often requires both bone and soft-tissue adjustments to achieve functional alignment. For those dogs who undergo surgery, rehabilitation recommendations are mainly patient dependent; however, it is important to protect the surgical site to allow adequate healing of tissues or bone if bony corrections are needed for mechanical alignment. This means avoiding certain movements like hyper-flexion of the stifle, or over-stressing bone and tissue with high-impact and uncontrolled movements. Therefore, adequate rest with staged and controlled rehabilitation recommended by a veterinarian or veterinary specialist provide the best outcomes," says Dr. Frye.

Post-operative care will vary with the procedure. Soft-tissue surgery will mean three to four weeks of confinement. For any surgery involving bone, six to eight weeks of limited activity and confinement is expected. Most dogs will be gingerly using the repaired leg after two to four weeks. Plan on leash walks and closely supervised activity until the dog is healed.

Likely a Genetic Fault

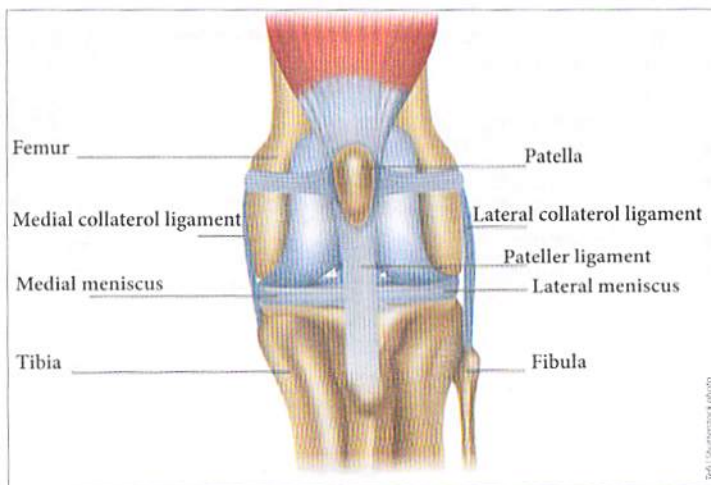
Rarely, a dog may show signs of patellar luxation after trauma such as being hit by a car. Most cases are due to inherited defects in development and should be considered genetic faults. Dogs with luxating patellas should not be bred.

According to the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals, puppies with severe cases have abnormal movement identifiable by 3 to 4 weeks of age, which is when the pup starts to walk and move around. By 8 weeks of age, most cases can be diagnosed, and even mild cases will show some abnormal movement.

Patellar luxations are one of the most common orthopedic conditions in dogs with up to 7% of small-breed puppies being affected, says the American College of Veterinary Surgeons.

Careful rehabilitation exercises will help to maintain muscle mass and range of motion during the post-operative healing period. These exercises will be adapted specifically for your dog with considerations of arthritis present and overall fitness and activity level of your dog. Continuing the rehabilitation exercises for your dog can mean less arthritis and pain over the years.

Most dogs recover fully and go on to lead normal lives. A few dogs, especially if they had higher grades of luxation, may have the luxation recur, even after surgery. Large dogs may have more complications than small dogs. ■



Notice the placement of the patella, nestled in the trochlear groove.

Zoom, Zoom, Zoom!

Your dog isn't crazy, he's just having fun

Does your dog ever get a crazy look in his eyes, tuck his butt, and take off running wild laps around your house or yard? This explosion of activity has many nicknames among dog owners, from zoomies and crazy eights to midnight madness and demon possession, but the official scientific term (oh yes, we're serious) is Frenetic Random Activity Periods, or FRAPs.

Why Do Dogs Get FRAPs?

"There is no known specific cause of FRAPs in dogs," says Pamela J. Perry, DVM, PhD, Behavior Resident at Cornell. "However, they appear to be a way to release pent-up energy or, perhaps, to alleviate stress. A dog who has been home alone all day with nothing to do may feel the need to zoom around the house or yard to expend some of that energy and get some relief from hours of under-stimulation. FRAPs also can occur whenever a dog becomes very excited (e.g., when an owner returns after a long absence)."

FRAPs are most common in puppies and young dogs, but other dogs continue to get the zoomies once in a while for their whole lives. Some owners are able to instigate an episode by playing in a certain way or making a particular sound that sets the dog off into crazy mode. Or, sometimes, it's just a wide-open space.

Times when your dog may get FRAPs include:

- ▶ When you get home from work
- ▶ Late in the evening
- ▶ During play
- ▶ During training if overstimulated
- ▶ After defecating
- ▶ When something exciting happens

Play With Me!

"If your dog exhibits zoomies frequently or at inopportune times (such as when you are asleep), she may be telling you

that she needs more exercise and mental stimulation. Otherwise, enjoy the adorable antics while they last!" says Dr. Perry. Spending more time interacting and bonding with your dog is always a good thing for both of you.

For physical exercise, you can take your dog for a hike or jog (depending on age) or play with a toy. Swimming is another great way to wear out your dog and keep him fit.

For mental exercise, work on reviewing household manners and teach some new tricks. Scenting games, such as finding a hidden treat or identifying an item that has your scent on it, are also excellent ways to work your dog's brain. Taking a walk in a new location with new things for your dog to see and sniff combines both types of exercise, and can be more satisfying than a walk in a familiar spot.

Watch for Hazards

Zoomies themselves won't hurt your dog, but a dog running around at full

speed without a plan can have some unfortunate consequences.

"Although FRAPs are normal, a dog zooming around the house or yard may be in danger of injuring themselves (or breaking something). Owners should keep zooming dogs away from stairs, slippery floors, obstacles, and the road," says Dr. Perry.

Keep your dog in an enclosed space when off-lead. The best footing for hard running is grass, but carpet and packed dirt are also good options. Hard floors, ice, and unstable footing such as gravel or sand increase the risk of the dog slipping or falling, which could end in injury. Fill in any holes in the yard, or mark them clearly with a barrier such as a post or traffic cone so your dog can avoid them.

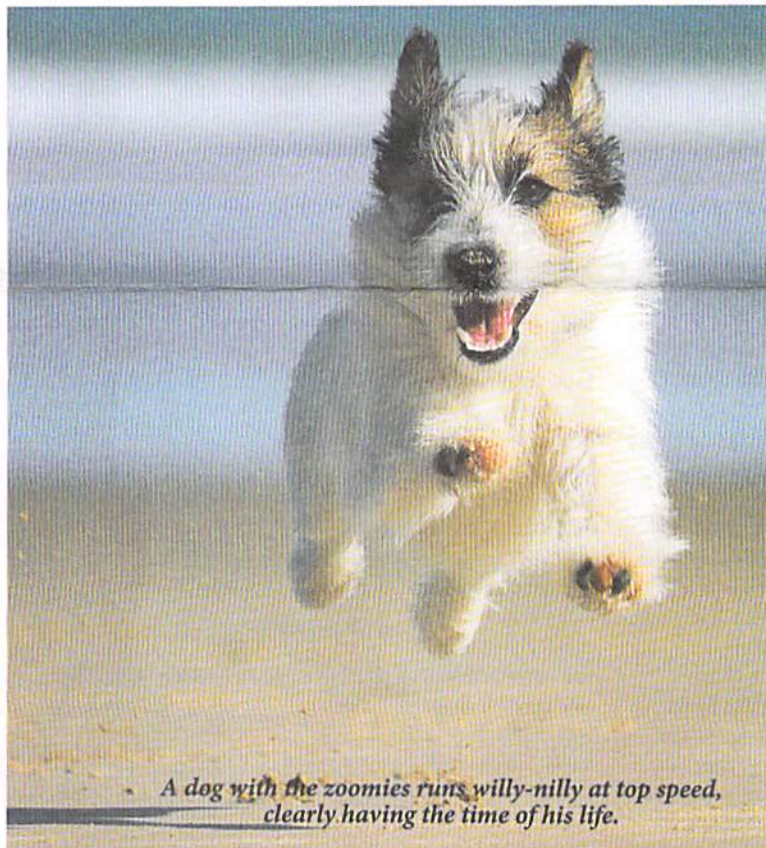
"If a dog zooming around the house or yard appears in pain, frightened, or anxious, however, the owner should investigate what caused the distress by seeking veterinary help," says Dr. Perry.

Your dog's posture during and after a FRAP episode will tell you if he is having fun or if he's upset. A typical happy zooming dog will be loose and even wiggly, bouncing around you when he slows down. His tongue may flap out of his mouth, and he may play bow. Many

dogs tuck their butts and tails as they run, as if they're scooting along and trying to keep their tail out of a playmate's grasp (this is even more common if you have another dog to give chase!).

A frightened dog will be more tense, with wide eyes and a tightly tucked tail that stays tucked to the belly even when he stops running. He may also carry his head low with ears folded back submissively. A scared dog needs to be calmed down, as his frenzy is not a happy one.

If you haven't seen a dog exhibiting FRAPs, do a search for videos on the internet. It is quite the hoot! And if your dog does get the zoomies in a safe space, never fear, and let him party on. ■



A dog with the zoomies runs willy-nilly at top speed, clearly having the time of his life.

iStockphoto

A Difficult Decision

Should you treat your dog for cancer?

Your beloved dog has just been diagnosed with cancer. Your world is shattered. Take a deep breath and pause. You have big decisions to make.

Few canine cancer situations require an immediate response. Usually, you have time to think, talk with veterinarians, research options, and consider what is right for your dog.

You know your dog better than anyone else, and you are in the best position to make this decision. Consider his habits and personality, and get the facts about this cancer.

Get an Exact Diagnosis: A definitive diagnosis can help in your decision making. A histopathologic diagnosis, complete with staging or grading (depending on the type of cancer), gives you the best idea of prognosis and potential survival time.

Consider Complications: Research the projected behavior of the cancer your dog has, such as metastatic disease. Some cancers are so aggressive that even with a full treatment, most dogs will die in three to four months. If your dog's lungs are full of cancer spread from his primary site, your treatment options become extremely limited and comfort care/hospice might be the best choice based on quality of life.

Weigh the Prognosis: Your veterinarian's prognosis is based on experience with many dogs. As is natural, we tend to grasp at the "best scenario," but realistically, that outcome only applies to a few dogs. When you hear that the expected survival with treatment is two to 15 months, you might anticipate at least five or six months. And maybe you'll get lucky and get a year. But there's also a chance you may only gain two months.

Be Realistic: Cancer treatments often come with difficult side effects. An aggressive cancer will require more extensive treatments, which often come with a higher risk for serious complications. If you work outside your home and your dog is left dealing with bouts of vomiting and diarrhea, it is not pleasant for either of you. No one can predict which dogs will sail through treatment and which dogs may require extra hospitalizations and care.

Look at the Whole Dog: Age and other health conditions come into play



Consider what his quality of life will be like.

as well. If your dog has been battling congestive heart failure and a chronic kidney condition, then going full force to treat a cancer may be a lost cause. In addition, concomitant health problems may limit your treatment options.

Putting It All Together: "There are a lot of factors to consider when deciding whether to pursue a specific anti-cancer treatment for your pet. For some owners, these factors can include their pet's personality and demeanor, as well as how well the pet travels and other family circumstances. Even if a specific anti-cancer treatment isn't pursued, there are often palliative therapies that can help relieve pain, inflammation, and nausea that can occur secondary to cancer," states Kelly R. Hume, DVM, DACVIM, Associate Professor, Clinical Sciences Adjunct Associate Professor, Biomedical Sciences at Cornell University.

If you're torn about whether to treat your dog, ask your veterinarian for a referral to a veterinary oncologist or even a second general practitioner if an oncologist isn't available in your area. Don't rely on social media! Check out university websites, veterinary websites, and oncology specialty websites. Experts can give you accurate information, but even they can't predict exactly how your individual dog might respond to a certain treatment. If your dog's cancer has already metastasized, there is no cure. Treatment would be aimed at providing quality of life for as long as possible.

And that's what should be at the top of your decision-making list: quality of life. A few months of treatment discomfort may be worth it if the prognosis is possible years of healthy life.

But a few months of discomfort to gain a month or two of quality time may not be the tradeoff you want. "As an oncologist, I recommend treatment when the pet is likely to live longer with it than without it," advises veterinary oncologist Sue Ettinger DVM DACVIM (Cornell 1998).

You know your dog best: If he is not going to handle treatment well, gets highly stressed or can't be easily managed, then treatment may not be in his best interests. Keeping him comfortable, letting him enjoy the things he loves, and spoiling him during the time he has left might be the best thing for him.

There are palliative and hospice options for dogs who aren't going to be treated for their cancers. Pain medications and prednisolone are commonly used to help keep dogs comfortable. Comfort care may include a more padded bed, ramps when movement gets difficult, special foods, more frequent but shorter walks, and more of your one-on-one time.

Remember that dogs don't live for tomorrow. They live in the here and now. Do your research, talk to your veterinarian, and trust yourself. Use both your heart and your head to decide what's best for you and your dog. There is no wrong decision. ■

Financial Concerns

Financial concerns are going to be important. If you have pet health insurance, most comprehensive policies may cover much of the financial burden for oncology treatments (this is dependent upon your policy, however, and varies with the deductibles, co-insurance amounts, and possible monetary limits on treatment you chose).

If your dog is insured, check to see exactly what treatments, diagnostics, medications, etc. are covered. Get that in writing. Sometimes, the newest therapies are not covered or ancillary treatments such as acupuncture for pain or rehabilitation post-surgery are not included in your coverage. Maxing out a high-interest credit card, taking out a loan, using up your meager savings, skipping a rent payment, or having your car repossessed are not wise choices, especially if your dog's prognosis is poor.

Akita Refuses to Walk

With pain ruled out, the solution is step-by-step training

Q I recently adopted a 4-year-old male Akita named Diogi. He is amazing! I love him very much (and I am pretty sure he loves me too).

He has a wonderful disposition and likes people of all ages and animals as well. He enjoys playing with his friends. Lately, though, Diogi has become increasingly resistant to my commands while out for a walk. He will just sit or lie down, and he refuses to go on (there is nothing physically wrong, I've checked with his veterinarian).

My uncle tells me to shorten and pull on his leash. I refuse to do this. I would greatly appreciate any assistance you can provide.

A I am sure that Diogi does love you. You did the very thing I would have suggested as the first step in treating his refusal to walk: You took him to your veterinarian to be sure there wasn't some painful condition that was causing his reluctance (absolute refusal) to walk. I am glad you didn't take your uncle's advice and pull him along. An Akita would be quite a heavy load to pull, and Diogi might be hurt while being dragged.

Dogs usually have a reason for their



Akitas are quiet, muscular dogs known for their courage and loyalty. They are large dogs, weighing as much as 130 pounds (males). They generally have a broad head with dark, alert eyes and a full curled tail.

actions, so let's see if you can find out why Diogi is refusing to move. You haven't had him long, so whatever he dislikes about the walk must have happened recently. Is there a bigger aggressive dog whose yard he has to pass? Is there an especially noisy neighbor whose hedge trimmer makes an ear-splitting sound?

I have been assuming that he is refusing to walk soon after you leave home. If, instead, he refuses to walk after playing with his dog friends at the dog park, he may just be reluctant to leave his friends so soon.

If he refuses to walk a few yards from your house, take him just outside the door and look at his posture and his ear position. As an Akita, he will not uncurl

his tail unless something is really, really scaring him, so his tail will not be much help in reading his emotions. We will have to rely on his ears and eyes.

Does he lower his ears when you start down the sidewalk? Can you see the whites of his eyes? These are signs of anxiety. If he is frightened, he may be afraid of the whole walking project. For example does he put his ears down when he sees the leash? If so, you can begin by desensitizing him to the leash.

Find the point at which the dog is only mildly anxious and start there, working in baby steps. For example, hold the leash close to his head and give him a treat. Repeat several times so he learns that the presence of the leash means a lovely piece of chicken.

The next day, show him the leash, reach for his collar, give him a treat. After another day or two, you can reward him for letting you snap the leash on his collar. Don't take him for walks during the

desensitization period. Be sure that he has plenty of active play at home, such as fetch or agility training.

If the dog shows anxiety at the sight of the leash, start by presenting the leash and rewarding with a high-value treat. It's important to present the leash and then reward so that the presence of the leash predicts a treat. Be careful to avoid using food simply to lure the dog on a walk. Once the dog is completely comfortable with the leash, progress to the next step, putting on the leash, etc. Do this daily, keeping the training sessions short, ending a good note.

With time and patience, you can get him through this new habit. When you have time, please let us know how this works for you. ■

Do You Have a Behavior Concern?

Send your behavior questions to Cornell's renowned behavior expert Katherine Houpt, VMD, Ph.D., shown here with Yuki, her West Highland White Terrier. Email to dogwatcheditor@cornell.edu or send by regular mail to DogWatch, 535 Connecticut Ave., Norwalk, CT 06854-1713.



Coming Up ...

- ▶ Home Care: Upset Stomach Remedies
- ▶ Help for the Dog with a Weak Rear End
- ▶ Feeding the High-Performance Dog
- ▶ First Aid Help: Choking Dog Techniques

© HAPPENING NOW...

Import Regulation—JAVMA News says the three veterinarians in Congress have introduced legislation that would give new tools and authority to the federal government to monitor and safeguard the health of dogs being imported. The hope is to ensure that the federal government is appropriately screening the large number of dogs entering the country each year to ascertain they are healthy and to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Paw of Courage—The American Kennel Club (AKC) honored Dogtor Loki, a 2-year-old Rottweiler (pictured), and



the Go Team Therapy Dogs with the Paw of Courage award. The dog, owned by a med student, delivers care packages to medical professionals working on the front lines during the COVID-19 pandemic. ■