

Hypertrophic Osteodystrophy

by Jill Swedlow

HOD stands for hypertrophic osteodystrophy. I'm no expert on this one as it's one of the few problems my dogs have not had to endure (knock on wood!!!!!!). I don't believe that the cause is known. The symptoms are elevated fever, up to 106 sometimes, inflammation and possible swelling of the pastern joints (the joint above the foot in the front legs) usually accompanied by severe pain. The joints will feel hot to the touch and pressure will elicit a painful reaction. Sometimes the dogs will just lie there not moving. In less severe cases they'll move around but in great pain. Sometimes the pain is so intense they lie there and scream. Unfortunately this disease is often not properly diagnosed by vets as few have seen it. There isn't much known yet about treatment either.

I had a friend who's bitch had the lie-there-and-scream kind, and since there was little to lose, they used an injectable form of an analgesic called Banamine (a horse medication) which gave her immediate relief. Intravenous dosage of vitamin C and (I believe, but am not sure here) cortisone is often given. One thing many breeders say to do is immediately reduce the protein content of the food. Down to 17-18%. In mild cases this is often enough to take care of it. This is almost exclusively a problem that affects puppies between the ages of 4-7 months of age.

Here are the symptoms.

- (1) Elevated temperature. If over 103, treat like HOD at least until you get to the vet for an x-ray.
- (2) Pastern joints are hot to touch and painful to pressure.
- (3) Dog does not want to get up and move or moves with obvious discomfort.
- (4) sometimes nothing more than a mild lethargy and no appetite.

If you even SUSPECT HOD do the following:

- (1) Immediately give 2000 mg of vitamin C orally.
- (2) Go to the vet and insist that x-rays be taken of the legs. This is the only way to diagnose HOD.

(3) Choice of treatment should be left up to your vet if he's knowledgeable about this disease. But if you're in a life threatening situation you may want to suggest to him the use of IV Banamine.

(4) The dog should be put on a wide spectrum antibiotic to prevent secondary infection. It is these infections that cause death in HOD. Mainly pneumonia because the dog only lies around. If you're puppy DOES just lie around, make sure he is moved from side to side periodically during the day if he's not doing this himself.

(5) Reduce protein in diet to 21% or lower. (I really have no idea if this helps or not, but it probably can't hurt).

(6) Give vitamin C orally at the rate of 2000 mg am & pm.

If caught early (first sign of lethargy and fever) and treated as above, recovery time should only be 2-3 days. However this does not mean your puppy is out of the woods. Relapse, up to 21 days post HOD, is still possible. Keep the puppy quiet (indoor play only) and don't stress him in any way. This means no shows, no car rides (except to vet), no nothing until the 21 day period is over. After that, all being well, he may resume life as normal.

Since HOD only occurs during the fastest growth phase, it seems reasonable to assume that this is somehow linked to fast growth. However I know of some lines that seem very prone to it, while others have never experienced it. So perhaps there's a genetic link?