

OSTEOCHONDRITIS DESSICANS (OCD)

Description

A disease occurring during the time of rapid skeletal growth (4-8 months) when the biomechanical stresses are the greatest on the developing skeleton. For whatever reason, the cartilage at the growth plates of the shoulder joints does not form properly and becomes friable. Sometimes this cartilage breaks free and floats in the joint space. This is called a joint mouse. The shoulder joint is the most common joint for osteochondritis in Great Danes, however it is not uncommon for this to occur in several joints at once.

Cause

The exact cause is unknown. Trauma due to excessive biomechanical stresses on the shoulder is suspect. The inheritance of predisposing factors such as growth rate, muscular and skeletal structure and mass, need investigation and are, at present non-conclusive.

Recently (2007) OFA (the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals) began certification for dogs that are OCD free.

Diagnosis

The dogs history and age are helpful, however a final diagnosis must be made by radiograph.

Treatment

Affected animals should be allowed only restricted exercise for 4 to 6 weeks. It is recommended they be walked on a leash and not allowed to run freely. The use of the drug Adaquan (2 1/2 cc given every 5 days intramuscularly)* can be very helpful. Anti-inflammatory drugs are not advised since they may promote physical activity and hence may exacerbate the condition.

Surgical intervention may be necessary if restricted activity is not successful. If surgical intervention is required, it should be done soon after diagnosis to prevent osteoarthritis from developing in the joint.

*Great Dane Reporter Magazine, May/June 1989, p.38, ADEQUAN, An Alternative For OCD by James W. Barger, DVM

[The AKC has a rule that classifies OCD as an inherited disease. It further states that if the dog has had corrective surgery for this condition, it is disqualified from the show ring. However, if the dog recovers without surgery, it can be shown. This rule is based on ignorance and makes absolutely no sense! If AKC wants to disqualify dogs who have genetic disease, then there are many other diseases that it must add to it's list. So consider this fair warning if you're thinking of doing surgery on your dog to correct OCD. I'm Jill and that's my opinion].