

# Animal WELLNESS

For a long, healthy life!

**ALLERGIES**  
and skin health

*Soothing*  
HERBAL REMEDIES  
for her skin

BUILDING A  
*Beautiful* COAT  
– from the inside out

**SUPER SEED  
RECIPES**  
you can share with Fido

**INDOOR**  
*allergens*  
Find out what's  
making him itch

**VITAMIN D**  
– is she getting  
enough?

Training  
**TIPS**  
for **safe**  
*off-leash* runs

## Crusoe

THE *celebrity* DACHSHUND  
This whimsical wiener dog has taken the world  
by storm with his wardrobe of quirky costumes

APRIL/MAY 2015  
Display until May 11, 2015

\$6.95 USA/Canada



7 25274 79635 9  
VOLUME 17 ISSUE 2

AnimalWellnessMagazine.com



**BONUS INSIDE!**



There are many reasons why a dog might suffer *limb paralysis* – and just as many ways to help him *overcome* his disability.



Photo courtesy of Eddie's Wheels

Jake is clearly overjoyed to regain his mobility with a doggy wheelchair.

# CARING FOR A PARAPLEGIC CANINE

By Michelle Tilghman, DVM, CVA, CCRP

Paraplegia in dogs is more common than you might think. In this article, we'll look at why it happens, and what can be done to help a paralyzed dog live a normal life.

## FIRST, LET'S LOOK AT THE SPINAL CORD

The primary factor in an animal's ability to walk is his spinal cord. If it becomes injured or has a genetic propensity toward malformation, a dog may end up paralyzed. The canine spinal cord has a set of nerve tracts that are very sensitive to injury and pressure. Three spinal functions contribute to this sensitivity.

**1** The most sensitive tract in the spinal cord has to do with what we call proprioception, which tells the body where it is in space. A deficiency of this function is evident when the paw turns under and the dog walks on top of his feet. The first symptom you may notice is bloody nails, or claws scraping against the floor.

**2** The second most sensitive spinal function involves motor capability, the ability of the muscles to contract, produce movement or maintain position. The muscles need input from the central nervous system in order to contract and relax.

Symptoms of decreased motor function are flaccid muscles and an inability to stand and/or move the limb. Without proper motor function, the dog cannot support weight and is unable to walk.

**3** The last function is sensory, and enables the body to feel heat, pressure, pain, etc. The classic test for sensory function is to pinch the dog's foot; in a normal situation, the foot automatically withdraws from the pinch.

## BACK PROBLEMS THAT CAN CAUSE PARALYSIS

- Breeds such as the dachshund are prone to certain back problems that may lead to paraplegia. These breeds are usually chondrodystrophic, which means they have congenital dwarfism. They have long bodies, and their long bones grow curved rather than straight. The discs in their backs are also much more brittle and have the propensity to hernia upward and hurt the spinal cord. Once the spinal cord is hit with disc material, it causes swelling in the cord. It may actually even occlude the spinal cord, resulting in paralysis. Again, the breed most famous for this is the dachshund; in fact, they are the



poster children for paraplegic dogs. Many afflicted dachshunds are from four to seven years old, and paralysis can occur quite suddenly.

- Other types of back problem lead to a more progressive paralysis and are caused by discs that start to slowly herniate and push on the spinal cord. This issue is seen in older animals and may be observed on only one side, or both.
- Additional causes of paralysis include spinal tumors, trauma, neurological diseases like degenerative myelopathy, and congenital abnormalities.

*Continued on page 40.*

## Additional aids

**Physical therapy** retrains the undamaged spinal tracts to take over the functions of the injured ones. Most physical therapy uses equipment like underwater treadmills. The treadmill moves under the dog's feet so he'll automatically try to walk, while the buoyancy of the water helps take pressure off his limbs. The therapist moves his feet in a paw-over-paw motion to mimic a normal gait. This will retrain the dog's nervous system to walk. The sooner the dog is placed in physical therapy, the quicker his nervous system can be retrained.

**Harnesses** support the dog's body and can be used to help him up. Those designed to assist with handicapped animals should have handles as well as straps that are adjustable and provide support from underneath the body. It is very important that the harness fits the dog properly, and is put on correctly. Ensure that all his feet are placed on the ground in a normal posture, and that his head is up. Every time the dog's feet are on the ground, the central nervous system gets neural input and healing can start. The worst thing for a paralyzed animal is to spend all his time lying on his side.

**Wheelchairs** are also used to get the dog up and using his legs. They come in different sizes and shapes; it is vital the dog be measured to ensure a proper fit. The first intention of placing a dog in a wheelchair or cart is to get him strong enough to walk on his own, although he may need to use it for the rest of his life. As long as his quality of life is good, he'll be fine. (Turn to page 42 for more on dog wheelchairs and carts.)

Finally, try to have your dog eat or drink from a normal position. Depending on his condition and the degree of his paralysis, you may also need to express his bladder – your vet can show you how to do this. This is important because urinary tract infections are very common in paraplegic animals. Make sure his urine is checked regularly, especially if there is any odor or blood present.



# Training Your Dog Just Got Easier.

**NEW**

**Crunchy Training Treats**  
With 70% Wild Salmon  
Green Pea and Kelp Enriched

**Crunchy Training Treats**  
With Smoked Wild Salmon  
Nutritious Protein Support for Stronger Muscles  
Great for all Dogs  
For Professional Training and Daily Rewards

- ✓ Mini bites
- ✓ Gluten-free
- ✓ Omega-3s
- ✓ No fillers
- ✓ 400+ treats

QR Code

Made In the USA

## All in favor, show your paw!

[grizzlypetproducts.com](http://grizzlypetproducts.com)

Continued from page 39.

## FOUR RED FLAGS

If your dog is developing issues with his spinal cord, you'll see a few warning signs.

- 1 His nails scrape against the floor when he walks – you'll be able to hear it.
- 2 The dog's rear end starts to wobble or fall from side to side. It is harder for the animal to walk slowly than to walk fast. This condition is called ataxia and occurs because the muscles are not strong enough or lack sufficient neurological input to contract the muscles correctly.
- 3 He is becoming incontinent. The bladder and intestines need nerve input to contract and hold urine in the bladder and feces in the colon.
- 4 The dog drags his legs and is not able to stand. Sometimes one side is more affected than the other, although all legs can be involved if the lesion or disc is in the cervical area (neck). If only the back legs are affected, the problem is in the dog's back.

## TREATMENT OPTIONS

If your dog become paralyzed, or you notice any of the above signs, try to keep him quiet and limit his movement to prevent damage to the spinal cord, and see your veterinarian as soon as possible.

The veterinarian will taken radiographs to see where your dog is injured and rule out other problems in the spinal cord. Depending on the issue, there are several options for treatment.

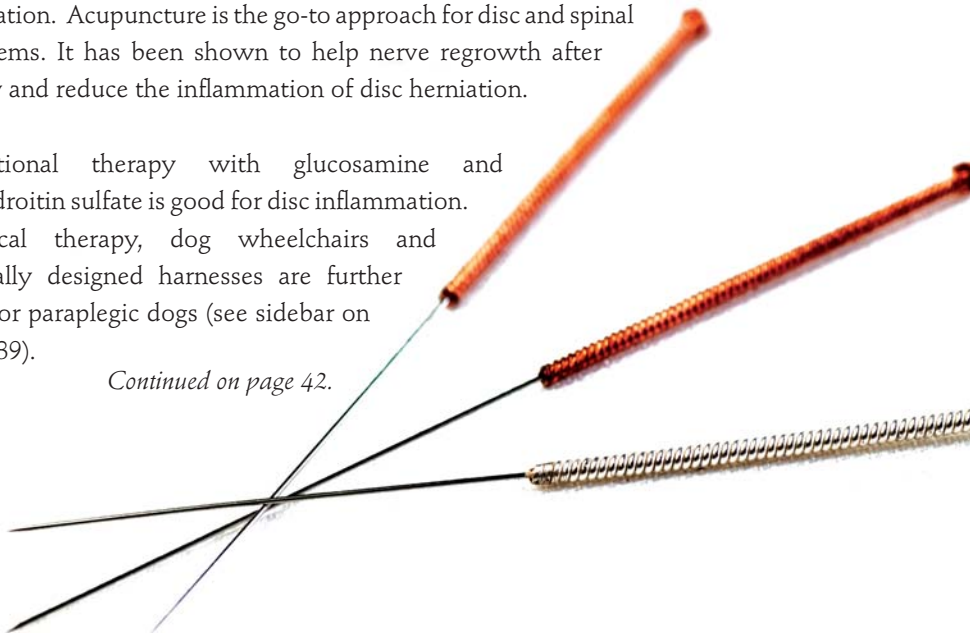
Conventional treatment includes medication to bring the swelling down in the disc and reduce inflammation in the area. Some veterinarians will use steroid and others anti-inflammatory medications.

In some cases, surgery to remove disc material is necessary. It should be done as soon as possible; the spinal cord is very sensitive to pressure and will start to die quickly if the material isn't removed.

Various alternative therapies can help with disc inflammation and herniation. Acupuncture is the go-to approach for disc and spinal problems. It has been shown to help nerve regrowth after injury and reduce the inflammation of disc herniation.

Nutritional therapy with glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate is good for disc inflammation. Physical therapy, dog wheelchairs and specially designed harnesses are further aids for paraplegic dogs (see sidebar on page 39).

Continued on page 42.



## Cholodin®

The original choline-loading dietary supplement.

Developed especially for geriatric dogs.

Cholodin® may help your pet with problems such as:

- Increased sleep time
- Lethargy, a reduced awareness of surroundings
- Disorientation, confusion
- Decreased appetite
- Impaired hearing

Packaged in 4 convenient sizes:  
50 tablet - 180 tablet - 500 tablet  
also 1 pound powder for top dressing

AVAILABLE THROUGH YOUR VETERINARIAN



Visit our website: [www.mvplabs.com](http://www.mvplabs.com)  
Phone: 800-856-4648  
Email: [mvplabs@mvplabs.com](mailto:mvplabs@mvplabs.com)