MARSAGAN LABRADORS

Puppy/Dog Care Information Pack

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Contents

I hope this information will be of use to you and wish you many happy and healthy years with your dog.

Sincerely,

Nicky Marr

Vaccinations – from puppy to adult

All puppies leave us having had their first vaccinations at 6 weeks of age. Your puppy will require its second injection when it is 10 weeks old: the vaccinations consist of one primo-injection and a booster four weeks later. The timing of these essential vaccinations *does* vary according to different practice policies however, so check with your veterinary surgery when booking an appointment.

The diseases that vaccination protects against are:

- Distemper
- Hepatitis
- Parvovirus

These 3 diseases are commonly known as the C3 vaccination on your vaccination certificate. We issue you with a certificate which must be kept safe as you will need to show it as proof of vaccination to any kennels that your dog may visit in the future. , You are also given a health card which allows you to keep an accurate record of all worming, flea control and variations in your dog's weight.

These diseases are generally fatal. Dogs are still at risk as these diseases are seen in practice from time to time, particularly Parvovirus. lf you take care of a puppy you must be responsible and ensure that vaccinations and all other aspects of preventative health care are taken seriously.

lf you plan to board your dog in kennels at any stage it is recommended that you have the Kennel Cough vaccine administered every 6 months for maximum protection. This vaccine is given nasally. In some kennels, it is mandatory.

There has been some questioning regarding the safety of vaccines recently. It is important that your dog be in full health when the vaccines are given. The vet should give your dog a full health check including taking its temperature. Do not be afraid to ask your vet to do so if (s)he does not do it. Millions of vaccines are given each year and very few reactions to vaccines reported. You may find your puppy becomes lethargic and or quiet after the initial vaccine but if you are worried or there are other symptoms – contact your vet.

Worms

Marsagan puppies are wormed every two weeks from two weeks of age until they leave for their new homes. You should continue to worm your pup every two weeks until three months of age, then every 3 or 4 months depending on the product you choose to use.

How a dog gets infected by worms depends on the kind of worms the Labrador has. The most common ones in dogs in general are:

- Roundworms
- Hookworms
- Whipworms
- Tapeworms
- Heartworms

It isn't always easy to tell if your Labrador has worms, unless he or she has a heavy infestation.

Roundworms

Roundworm Appearance: Roundworms look like spaghetti. On average, they are about 3-5 inches (7-12 cm) long. They live in dogs' intestines and consume partially digested food. Roundworms can be picked up from the ground, particularly from your dog sniffing other dogs' faeces. Roundworm eggs and larvae can live in the soil for months or even years. Your dog picks them up on his coat, paws and muzzle and then ingests them while grooming - thus infecting himself. Puppies can also pick them up by nursing from an infected mother. (This is true even if the mother tests negative for roundworms as roundworm larvae (immature worms) encrypt in the mother's muscles and are not detectable by tests for adult worms).

Types of roundworm: There are two different types of roundworms affecting dogs and puppies:

- *Toxocara canis*
- *Toxascaris leoanina*

Symptoms: Symptoms range from none to vomiting, diarrhoea, a pot-bellied appearance, dehydration, weight loss and deteriorating condition. With large infestations, lung damage can sometimes occur resulting in breathing problems.

Prevention & Treatment: Both of these roundworms are treated with the same medication so it is not necessary to determine which of the two is present. Several very safe and effective drugs are available to kill roundworms in the intestine. Some of these drugs temporarily anesthetize the worms so that they pass out of the dog with a normal bowel movement. Live and dead worms can be found in the faeces. Discuss treatments and prevention medicine with your vet and he will prescribe accordingly. Accurate diagnosis of roundworms is important since they can cause serious

problems. If you have any doubts, you should take a stool sample from your dog to the vet to be examined.

Hookworms

Hookworm Appearance: Hookworms are smaller than roundworms. They are called hookworms because they feed on blood by hooking onto the wall of the intestine. They have sharp teeth which can cause a dog's intestine to bleed.. Dogs can pick up hookworms from the ground where other dogs have passed eggs before, or from feeding on an infected bitch. In adult dogs, a fairly large worm load may be tolerated, but in puppies, hookworms can be life-threatening. Puppies exposed to hookworms generally grow up with some degree of immunity against future infections.

Hookworm Symptoms:

- Dermatitis
- Pneumonia
- Enteritis
- Bloody diarrhoea
- Blood loss
- Anaemia
- Weight loss

Prevention & Treatment: It is once again important for you to speak to your vet if you suspect that your dog has hookworms. Simple tests on stool samples can reveal if a dog is infected.

Whipworms

Whipworm Appearance: Whipworms are intestinal parasites which are about 0.25 inches (6 mm) long. Adult whipworms look like pieces of thread with an enlarged end. Whipworms pass microscopic eggs in dogs' stools. The most common method of whipworm transmission is through the faeces of dogs, but it is also suspected that they may be transmitted through soil. The eggs are very resistant to drying and heat, so they can remain viable in the environment for years. When they mature, they are able to re-infect dogs in 10-60 days. Swallowing eggs will also contaminate dogs as they hatch in the lower intestinal tract where they then reproduce. Whipworms live in the caecum and colon where they cause severe irritation to the lining of the intestinal walls.

Symptoms:

- Watery, bloody diarrhoea

- Weight loss
- General debilitation.

Prevention & Treatment: Avoid taking young puppies to areas where other dogs may be or may have been. If you suspect your dog has whipworms, speak to your vet.

Tapeworms

Tapeworm Appearance: Tapeworms (*Dipylidium*) have a long, flat, ribbon-tape appearance. Adult tapeworms live in dogs' intestines, where they reproduce and lay eggs. The eggs are released in the dog's faeces. Adult tapeworms can reach 8 inches (20 cm) in length. The adult worm is made up of many small segments about 1/8 inch (3 mm) long. Dogs become infected by swallowing fleas that are infected with tapeworm eggs. This process begins when tapeworm eggs are swallowed by flea larvae. Contact between flea larvae and tapeworm eggs are thought to occur most frequently in contaminated bedding or carpets. As the flea is digested within the dog's intestine, the tapeworm hatches and anchors itself to the intestinal lining.

Symptoms:

- Peri-anal pruritis

Occasionally, the mobile segments can be seen crawling near the anus or on the surface of a fresh stool. These segments look like grains of rice and contain tapeworm eggs; the eggs are released into the environment when the segment dries. The dried segments are small (about 1/16, or 2 mm), hard and golden in colour. These dried segments can sometimes be seen stuck to the hair around the dog's anus. They may cause debilitation and weight loss when they occur in large numbers.

Prevention & Treatment: Tapeworms are not usually detected by routine examination. Vets need to depend on the owner to notify them of a possible tapeworm infection in their dog. Once advised, treatment can be given.

NB: Control of fleas is very important in the management and prevention of a tapeworm infection. Flea control involves treating the dog, the indoor and the outdoor environment of the dog. A lot of vets recommend Frontline®.

HEARTWORMS

Heartworms next to ruler Heartworms are common in dogs throughout Australia (cats can have them, too). They are among the most damaging parasites in dogs but they are almost 100 percent preventable. Heartworms are transmitted by mosquitoes and, once mature, they live in the heart and large blood vessels of the lungs. Adult heartworms can measure over one foot in length.

How will heartworms affect my dog?

The heartworm larvae deposited by the feeding mosquito eventually migrate to the chambers of the heart or into the vessels of the lungs. The worms can affect blood flow throughout the body. Heartworm infection can affect many different organs of the dog—heart, lungs, kidneys, and liver, for example—so symptoms may be varied. A veterinarian may suspect that a dog has been infected if an active animal tires easily or shows shortness of breath or coughing. Early in the disease, dogs are often asymptomatic. Signs are often progressive over weeks to months and untreated, heartworm infection can be fatal.

Testing for heartworm infection

Blood tests are most commonly used to diagnose heartworm infection in dogs. An in-house screening test run by your veterinarian may be followed by a confirmatory blood test sent to an outside lab. Other tests frequently employed in determining the extent and severity of heartworm infection in a dog include blood tests of kidney and liver function, x-rays of the chest and an ultrasound (sonogram) of the heart. Once infection is confirmed, your veterinarian will discuss the most appropriate treatment for your pet.

How do I prevent my dog from getting heartworms?

Fortunately, with medication, heartworm infection is almost always preventable.Ask your veterinarian about heartworm prevention. Preventive treatment should begin at 6 or 8 weeks of age in puppies and after tests have been conducted in older dogs to determine if your dog has already been infected. An annual blood test should be run to confirm the dog continues to be negative for heartworms. If your dog does have heartworms, your veterinarian can advise you about treatment options

Fleas

What are fleas? Fleas are small, black insects about 2 mm in length. They live in the bedding and coats of dogs, cats and other animals and feed on blood.

How can I tell if my dog has fleas? Close examination of your dog may reveal small reddish insects moving rapidly through your dog's coat. If there are few fleas present, only flea faeces may be evident: small, black specks. To confirm the presence of fleas, place some flea dirt on a wet piece of cotton wool. The dirt will turn red as the blood pigment within the faeces dissolves.
Some dogs tolerate fleas well, with very little scratching. Others show severe allergic reactions to both flea bites and flea saliva. This can result in intense scratching and chewing of the neck, ears, thighs and base of the tail. Your dog may also spin around quickly to chew itself when the flea bites. In extreme cases, your dog's skin may start to scale and discolour. Hair loss and secondary bacterial infections may also occur, often in circles called 'hotspots'.

How do I control fleas? Both indoor and outdoor areas can be sprayed with insecticides to eliminate fleas, if necessary. Treatment of your home or yard is best performed by a trained pest control expert. Consult with your veterinarian as to which flea products will break the flea life cycle in the environment.

Most flea problems can be managed by treating and preventing fleas on your dog. It is important to keep in mind that flea problems may be different from pet to pet or between households, and each problem may require a special method of control.

See your veterinarian for advice on your specific situation. Your veterinarian can recommend safe and effective products for controlling fleas and can determine exactly what you need. Your veterinarian can also determine whether you should consult with a pest control specialist about treating your home and yard.

Adult fleas lay their eggs on the dog within a few days of their first blood meal. These eggs are non-sticky and drop off onto surrounding carpets and bedding. Eggs hatch and produce larvae that feed on flea faeces and organic matter in the environment. The larvae dislike light and tend to live deep in the carpets and soil.

After a period of growth, larvae pupate. This is when the larvae morph into adults. Adult fleas are stimulated to emerge from the pupa by warmth of body heat, vibrations such as a dog walking by or by exhaled breath (carbon dioxide). Fleas may bite humans before jumping off to find a more suitable host. Fleas can be a major problem as most products that appear in the pet shop will either be ineffective or not usable until puppies are over 3 months of age. Frontline® spray is a very good treatment and is safe to use when puppies are only 2 days old. At this age treatment should be repeated every four weeks. The spray is put onto the skin at a dose of six pumps per kg using the 100ml spray. This will last for 3 months in the adult dog and one bottle may be enough to last up to one year.

Ticks

Ectoparasites are organisms that live on the outside of an animal. Ticks are fairly common ectoparasites of dogs (and cats). How often you see ticks on your dog and how severe a tick assault will be depends on the region of the country in which you live, the time of year (tick activity varies in warm and cool weather), the habits of your dog, and how and when you use tick control products. Some ticks can infest dogs that spend most of their time indoors, and even dogs that only spend brief periods of time outside can have ticks.

How will ticks affect my dog?

Ticks attach to your dog by inserting their mouthparts into your dog's skin. Many ticks also produce a sticky, glue-like substance that helps them to remain attached. After attaching to your dog, ticks begin feeding on your dog's blood. The places where ticks attach can become red and irritated.

Although rare, ticks can consume enough of your dog's blood to cause a deficiency called anemia. Certain female ticks can also cause a rare paralysis in dogs as a result of a toxin they produce while feeding. More important, ticks are capable of causing many diseases in your pet. The disease with which most people are familiar is called Lyme disease. Another is Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

Lyme disease can cause arthritis and swelling of your dog's joints, resulting in painful lameness. Rocky Mountain spotted fever can cause fever, lameness, and other signs. There are also other diseases that ticks can transmit to your dog. Your veterinarian can answer questions about the diseases that are important where you live.

How do I prevent my dog from getting ticks?

It is very difficult to prevent your dog's exposure to ticks. Ticks can attach to your dog when he or she goes with you on walks, hikes, or during any outdoor activities. The best way to prevent ticks from attaching to your dog is by the regular use of tick control products. Your veterinarian can advise you about the best product for your dog and your situation. Your veterinarian is also aware of diseases that are common in your area and can pose a risk to your dog.

Teeth

Dogs have a tendency to develop gingivitis (inflammation of the gum) as they grow older. Gingivitis can appear as young as 3 years of age, but can be prevented with good dental hygiene. Two other common problems dogs with poor hygiene have are loose and abscessed teeth. Studies show that 98% of dogs with bad breath suffer from periodontal disease ('disease around the teeth'), a result of plaque build-up. Dogs do not normally get cavities, but are prone to developing a brown substance called 'calculus' around their gums. Calculus, laden with bacteria, can eventually cause receding teeth, exposing the roots. Although antibiotics can suppress gum infections, only tartar and plaque removal can prevent them from reoccurring. The chances are that if your dog has bad breath, there is a problem with his teeth.

Teeth Development

Your puppy will have a set of sharp puppy teeth except for molars when it arrives, as you will probably find out! Between the ages of 12 weeks and 6 months it will gradually shed its puppy teeth and grow its permanent, adult teeth. The first permanent teeth to come through are usually the two centre incisives on the upper jaw and the last are the big corner or canine teeth in the top and bottom jaws. Most puppies change teeth and feel very little discomfort, but occasionally there is soreness and bleeding. The average dog's mouth has 44 teeth. There are usually 22 on the top and 22 on the bottom. These teeth are divided into 8 upper and 6 lower incisors, 4 canines, 16 premolars, and 4 upper and 6 lower molars.

Ears

Ear problems are very common in dogs, and because Labrador ears hang down, they are at greater risk of having ear problems. Dogs with ear infections shake their heads, or rub them against furniture or floor. There might also be a yellow, brown or black discharge in one or both ears. They may also whine if the infection is causing them discomfort, and you can often smell an unpleasant odour from around the ear itself. If your dog displays any of these symptoms, take a closer look at the ears and you may notice red and inflamed ear canals. The ear itself may be sore to the touch.

Origins of ear problems include ear mites, allergies, yeast infection, food allergies, foreign bodies, such as plant awns, obstruction due to cancer, polyps, and excessive hair. Autoimmune diseases can also cause ear infections.

The two most common infections are otitis externa (infection of the ear canal) and otitis media (infection of the middle ear). The cause of ear canal infections most commonly bacterial or yeast related. It can also be a result of wax build up, thick or matted hair in the canal, debris, impaired drainage of the ear, mite infestations or be a secondary result of another bodily infection. Otitis media is a common result of the spread of an infection from the ear canal, where debris, ulceration, or improper cleaning may rupture the eardrum, moving the infection into the middle ear.

Eyes

Eye structure

The orbit is the bony cavity that contains and protects the eyeball. The eyelids are extensions of the skin of the face, and they are designed to protect the eye. The outer surface of the eyelid is covered with skin and sometimes contains the cilia (eyelashes). The inside is lined with a pink-white coloured conjunctival membrane. The nictitans or third eyelid arises from the inside corner of the eye and contains a strong cartilage support and a tear gland. It is also designed as an extra protective mechanism for the eye. The conjunctiva is a thin, nearly transparent, vascularized (containing blood vessels) tissue that covers the white of the eye and lines the eyelids. The lens is a soft, transparent, spherical structure that is suspended within the eye just behind the pupil. The lens is responsible for focusing light coming in through the pupil onto the retina in the back of the eye. The lacrymal system, which includes the lacrymal (major tear) gland and the gland of the third eyelid, is responsible for tear production and drainage of tears away from the eye.

How Do Eyes Function? The ability to see is dependent on the actions of several structures in and around the eyeball. When you look at an object, light rays are reflected from the object to the cornea. The light rays are bent (refracted) by the cornea and directed through the pupil to the lens, and then through the vitreous to the retina. The lens job is to make sure the light rays come into focus sharply on the retina. The resulting image on the retina is upside-down and the brain flips the image so that you see the image the right way around. The retina contains millions of light

receptors called rods and cones. Rods are sensitive to dim light and cones are sensitive to bright light and colour. The retina converts light energy into electrical signals and sends them to the brain via the optic nerve, which is the nerve that runs from the eye to the brain. In the brain the electrical signals are translated into an image that is perceived in an upright position.

Eye Problems

Ocular Discharge

Like their owners, Labradors sometimes wake up with ‘sleepers’ in their eyes - a crusty discharge that results from the eye’s natural self-cleaning. All dogs will get this from time to time and it is perfectly normal. There are some bulgy-eyed breeds such as pugs and pekinese that are much more prone to it than others. If your Labrador has ‘sleepers’ in its eyes, simply wipe them gently with a damp cotton pad to remove any discharge. If your dog’s eyes don’t produce a build up of discharge to any extent during the day, then you generally don’t have to worry about it.
If your labs eyes have a discharge throughout the day, they may have an infection. Eye infections are fairly common. They can crop up on their own or when something lodges in the eye. They can also occur when the surface of the eye, called the cornea, gets scratched. A telltale sign of infection is the appearance of the discharge. It will often be thick, yellow, gray, or green. It may form a crust on the eyelids as well.
Cataracts - Like a camera, eyes have a clear lens inside them that is used for focusing. A cataract is any opacity within a lens. The opacity can be very small (incipient cataract) and not interfere with vision. It can involve more of the lens (immature cataract) and cause blurred vision. Eventually, the entire lens may become cloudy, and all functional vision lost. This is called a mature cataract. Most cataracts in dogs are inherited. The cataract may develop rapidly over weeks, or slowly over years, in one or both eyes. Like humans, dogs also develop cataracts with age (often after 8 years of life).Cataracts can also develop in dogs with diabetes mellitus or in orphan puppies on an artificial milk replacer diet.

Distichiasis

Distichiasis is the term used to refer to extra hairs growing on the edge of the eyelid. It causes irritation, causing the dog to blink more frequently, hold its eye(s) partly closed and produce more tears, which may be visible in a tear overflow or a “tear streak”.

Retinal Dysplasia

Retinal dysplasia is the most important retinal disease affecting Labradors used for hunting and field trial work. The condition is relatively uncommon in show Labs. Retinal dysplasia is a widespread inherited condition in the Labrador. It involves an abnormal development of several structures of the visual system. Dogs may be very mildly affected and demonstrate folds in the retina. These are areas where extra retina develops and instead of forming a thin membrane over the back surface of the eye, it develops into folds. Folds may result in blind spots. Retinal dysplasia involves abnormal development of several structures of the visual system. Undernourishment

of the retina is also a problem and may cause localized retinal degeneration. Dogs with mild changes (i.e. a few retinal folds), usually have no visual compromise. Subtle changes on the part of the dog, on the positioning of the head while marking a bird, help affected Labradors make use of normal areas of the retina. Larger blind spots may cause dogs to miss a mark or miss stationary objects, while these dogs are able to perceive moving objects with less difficulty. Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA) and Central Progressive Retinal Atrophy (CPRA) are diseases that progressively destroy the retina's light receptors resulting in gradual loss of vision and blindness. Both PRA and CPRA are inherited conditions common in Labradors. If your lab has one of these diseases it may transmit it to its offspring if mated with a lab carrying the trait for the disease.

Eye Examinations to detect PRA/CPRA : A simple eye examination can lead to a diagnosis. Reputable and informed breeders should have their breeding dogs examined and certified. Ask to see the certification of 'no eye conditions' on both parents before purchasing a puppy.

Dry Eyes

Some dogs may develop a condition that leads to lower-than-average tear production. Insufficient tearing causes the cornea of the eye to become dry and damaged. This condition is commonly called Dry Eye. Dogs with this condition show obvious irritation of the eyes with thick yellow discharge. Ulceration of the cornea is common. The cornea looks dry and loses its normal shiny appearance. The nostril on the affected side is usually dry too because normally, tears flow from the eyes through the tear duct to the nostrils.

Eyelid Problems

Abnormalities of the eyelids are a common cause of eye disease in dogs. The eyelids may roll inwards causing hairs to rub against the eyeball. This condition is called **entropion** and necessitates an operation to be treated.

Hip Dysplasia

What is hip dysplasia?

Hip Dysplasia is a genetic disease that affects the hip joints of dogs. (It is also known as degenerative joint disease, arthrosis and osteoarthrosis) and can lead to pain and debilitation in your Labrador. When canine hip dysplasia (CHD) was first described in the 1930s, it was thought to be a rare condition. Dysplasia literally means abnormal, so hip dysplasia literally translates as abnormal formation of the hip socket. Despite years of research and the combined effort of the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals and responsible dog breeders, it has been impossible to eliminate hip dysplasia from Labradors. Hip dysplasia can be seen in dogs as young as five or six months of age. In others, symptoms do not develop until after the dog has matured.

Cause

Hip dysplasia is a multi-factional condition. Hip dysplasia is overwhelmingly a genetic trait that will not develop if there is no hereditary predisposition. Environmental factors, excess calcium in the diet of puppy food for large breed dogs, along with obesity, high protein and calorie diets contribute to causing the disease.

What happens to a dog with Hip Dysplasia?

The hip is a ball and socket joint, in a normal hip the ball fits comfortably into the socket, forming a pivot point. Dogs with a genetic predisposition for hip dysplasia are born with normal hips. However, as the dog grows, the structure of the hip joint becomes badly deformed, and the ball no longer fits comfortably into the socket and therefore does not rotate smoothly. Both hips are usually affected, but only one side may show symptoms. The damage then spreads to the synovial membrane lining the joint capsule and more degrading enzymes and inflammatory cells stream into the joint. Full thickness loss of cartilage allows the synovial fluid to contact nerve endings in the subchondral bone, resulting in pain in your dog. If it is left untreated the disease continues to progress, eventually causing crippling lameness and severe pain. Correcting this problem at an early age can help prevent this.

Symptoms of Hip Dysplasia

No one can predict when or even if a dysplastic dog will start showing clinical signs of lameness due to pain, but there are signs and symptoms that you should look out for and be aware of. These can be:

- unwillingness to run and play as much as they used to
- trouble getting up and down the stairs
- popping or snapping sounds when walking
- reluctance to exercise, jump or stand on hind limbs
- difficulty in getting up
- soreness after lying down or after heavy exercise
- sensitivity to the touch of the hindquarters
- abnormal stance (leaning forward) or gait (bunny-hopping)

lf you notice any of the above signs your vet should examine your dog. The condition will worsen until even normal daily activities are painful. Without intervention, affected dogs may be unable to walk at all by a couple years of age. In most cases, however, the symptoms do not begin to show until the middle or later years in a dog’s life.

Diagnosis

There are many diseases which display the same symptoms as hip dysplasia, therefore the only true way to diagnose hip dysplasia is by a complete physical and neurological examination, and then x-ray of the hips. Diagnosis of CHD is based on breed, history, physical exam findings, and an X-ray of the dog's pelvis. The standard "hip-extended" view is taken with the dog on his back, his legs fully extended, and his knees inwardly rotated. The X-ray film is then evaluated for the general appearance of the hip joints as well as for signs of degenerative joint disease (DJD). Other less commonly used methods of diagnosing hip dysplasia include computed tomography (CT scan), and ultrasonography.

How is Hip Dysplasia treated?

The treatment depends a lot upon the severity of the hip dysplasia and the age of the dog concerned. Treatment varies from simply restricting exercise to daily anti-inflammatory medications to surgery, depending on the severity of the condition. Proper treatment often allows affected dogs to live reasonably normal lives. The vet will discuss the prognosis for your dog. Any dog with hip dysplasia should be kept fit and trim as any excess weight will obviously aggravate the condition, but good muscle tone will help to support the dogs weight. Swimming is an excellent form of exercise which builds up the muscle without stress to the joints. Non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs, such as aspirin and carprofen, can often help manage pain. Research has shown that Vitamin C can also reduce the inflammation in the affected joints. Some people have also reported success with holistic medicines. However, in some dogs the arthritis in the joint can become so painful that if cannot be controlled medically. When the pain becomes this bad, there are various surgical procedures which can be done to relieve the pain. Each procedure has its pros and cons, and different veterinary surgeons may have more experience, and therefore be more skilled, with a particular type of surgery. One such procedure is called a femoral head osteotomy. This involves removing the head and neck of the femur so that the bone does not contact bone, and a fibrous scar tissue then forms a "false" joint As the dogs muscles must be strong enough to support the dog's weight on the false joint, regular exercise is very important. Another surgical procedure is hip replacement. This is the same as the human hip replacement, the diseased joint is taken out and an artificial joint is inserted.

Other ways to help your Labrador if it has Hip Dysplasia

Keep your dog's weight under control and provide controlled exercise. Going for short walks will give you an idea of your dog's limits. Proper exercise will maintain muscle tone and keep the joints moving and more fluid. Swimming is a superior form of exercise to achieve this goal. A warm environment and a well padded bedding area are also of benefit. Additional warmth helps chronically infected joints. Hot water bottles are helpful. Be safe when using, to avoid burning your dog. If your Labrador lives outside, bring him into the house. The harsh conditions and weather changes are hard on those already aching joints. Plus, they need a nice soft place to lay and sleep.

Prevention

No guarantee can be given when breeding radiographically-hip-dysplasia free dogs that their offspring will not develop the disease. A dog can be hip dysplasia free on a radiograph, yet still carry the genetic predisposition to this disease that will be transmitted to its offspring. The environment plays a large part in whether or not a dog will suffer from hip dysplasia. Nutrition is the greatest contribution. Puppies should be kept lean and not fat. Obviously a puppy which is carrying round too much weight will exacerbate any degeneration of the joint. Research has also shown that giving a diet too high in protein and calcium also exacerbates the condition. Rapid growth in a young puppy also contributes, and, in most cases, the rapid growth rate is directly related to feeding a high calorie diet to puppies. Over supplementation of calcium has likewise been shown to be a major factor in the development of skeletal disease in puppies. Exercise is the other main contribution. Many people over-exercise young puppies, or give them the wrong type of exercise. The wrong type of exercise can include forced running for any distance and too much exercise on tarmac or other hard surfaces. Up to at least six months of age, exercise on hard surfaces should be kept at a minimum. Correct exercise for puppies includes running and playing in the garden or in a park. Games that involve jumping and very rough play should be avoided, and your puppy should be allowed to rest as soon as he has had enough and must not "over-do" it. Swimming is an excellent form of exercise which builds up the muscles without putting stress on the joints.

Neutering

What is Neutering?
Neutering refers to the removal of the reproductive organs on both male and female animals. Neutering or spaying a female animal involves removing the womb and ovaries (an ovario-hysterectomy).

Why Should I Get My Labrador Neutered?

- Spaying a female dog eliminates the possibility of her getting uterine and ovarian cancer.

- It reduces the possibility of mammary and prostate cancer and eliminates the possibility of testicular cancer.

- Male dogs neutered early in life tend to be less aggressive towards other males and are not distracted by females in heat. Therefore, neutered males are less tempted to run away if there are females in heat. Males are also less likely to mark their territory. The only behaviour changes that are noted after neutering relate to behaviour influenced by male hormones i.e. aggression/dominance. Playfulness, friendliness, and socialization with people are not affected.

- Neutering your female dog will avoid problem of stray males coming into the garden. Un-neutered females usually come into season twice a year. Seasons typically last for about 3-4 weeks and during this time bitches become

receptive to the advances of male dogs. They may also roam — seeking a mate, and despite your best efforts accidents do happen.

Remember! There are certain times when the risks of surgery are greater for bitches, such as while they are in season, if they have a womb infection or if they are not in good general health. Your vet will give your dog a complete examination and decide when the best time would be to neuter. Many people opt for a pre-anesthetic blood test — which costs relatively little and will show whether your dog is in optimum health and has no under-lying kidney/liver disease for example which would affect the anesthetic. Before going ahead with neutering your dog, it is always best to discuss the pros and cons with your vet first.

When should I get my Labrador neutered?

The average age to neuter your dog is six months. You should consult with your vet as to the right time to schedule this procedure since there is some disagreement about the appropriate age to do this. A lot of vets recommend spaying bitches at 6 months of age. Some vets nowadays spay as early as 4 months - the surgery is easier- however, vets have different practice policies and each dog is an individual case. Personally, I like to see a dog or bitch reach full maturity before being neutered as neutering too early can affect their growth.

How is neutering done surgically?

An incision is made, generally just in front of the scrotum. The testicles are then removed through this incision. The blood vessels are tied off and cut. Castration is achieved. The skin incision will have either dissolvable stitches or non-dissolvable white nylon which will need removal in 10 days.

For bitches, (often called Spaying) a 2 to 3 inch incision is made in the abdomen, the entire uterus and the ovaries are then removed. The incision is then closed by stitching the various layers and finally the skin back together.

How will my Labrador be after it is discharged?

For the male, the scrotum is often swollen in the first few days after surgery. If the dog is immature at the time of neutering, the empty scrotum will flatten out as it grows. If it is mature at the time of neutering, the empty scrotum will remain as a flap of skin. Sometimes the incision is mildly bruised, but pain relief is almost never necessary post neuter. Most male dogs are eager to play by the day one after surgery but to keep the incision intact, it is best to restrict the dog from boisterous activity. Your vet will advise you when your dog has to go back to have a post-op check up. For the bitch it is crucial to rest her for 10 days and observe her carefully the first night after surgery. People do under-estimate the surgery involved — any unusual signs such as vomiting, shaking, hunched in pain, pale gums, bleeding — should be reported immediately to your vet. It is important that you do not feed or give your dog water for the first hour after getting home. Many dogs are very excited on

returning home and sometimes make themselves ill by eating or drinking too much right after they arrive home. Feed a bland meal such as chicken/rice/pasta and offer small drinks of water. Confine your dog to the house if possible, and take it out on leash walks for 10 days. No jumping up/running upstairs is allowed as this will put strain on the wound and healing muscles beneath and is very dangerous. Prevent your dog from licking and biting the stitches. Even a few licks can cause an infection — use a buster collar or an old t-shirt to prevent this if needed. Finally, you will have to make an appointment for a post-op check around 10-14 days after the operation to have the stitches removed.