



Torn Cranial Cruciate Ligament

Torn Cranial Cruciate Ligament (CCL)

The cranial cruciate ligament (CCL) is one of the major stabilizers of the knee. The CCL prevents forward displacement of the tibia as well as preventing internal rotation of the knee. The ligament may develop a partial or complete tear. It is a common cause of rear-leg lameness in dogs. It can occur suddenly (acute), upon injury, or progressively over time. Genetics is thought to play a role in congenital or developmental weakness of the ligament and obesity can exacerbate it. All breeds and all ages can be affected. Often, if one leg develops this condition, the other side will develop it eventually as well. The lameness may improve over time with conservative therapy, but surgery is the best method to resolve the lameness and minimize future arthritis.

Symptoms

- Pain in hind leg
- Lameness or inability to put pressure on the leg

Causes

A cranial cruciate ligament may tear due to trauma. Otherwise, the cruciate ligament may slowly deteriorate over time. Conformation, weight, genetics, and activity level may be factors that affect the deterioration of the ligament. These factors often affect both knees, and the opposite cranial cruciate ligament may subsequently tear as well.

Diagnostic tests

- Radiographs (x-rays) to evaluate the knee joint for swelling and the degree of arthritis.
- Palpation of the stifle to evaluate for instability
- In rare cases, MRI may be recommended

Treatment

Treatment depends entirely upon the individual situation of the pet based on its size, age, exercise level, and other factors. Some can be treated with pain medications and rest. Others require advanced surgical techniques such as TPLO (Tibial Plateau Leveling Osteotomy), TTA (Tibial Tuberosity Advancement), or Lateral Suture Surgery.

Post-operative Instructions

Strict rest should be enforced for 6 weeks after surgery regardless of the technique used. This means no running, jumping, or playing. Follow-up radiographs are taken to assess healing of the bone, with a TPLO or TTA. Physical therapy is often not necessary, but may be discussed if in the specific case, the surgeon feels it may be beneficial. A gradual return to normal activity will occur after adequate healing of the leg.

Outcome

Most animals that have surgical stabilization of the knee following a CCL tear have an excellent long term prognosis for return to a normal or near-normal level of function to their leg. Most complications are minor in nature, and are easily treated or self-resolving. Once healing is complete, it is very rare to have additional problems develop.

Please note that this information does not replace a direct consultation, with the patient and all clinical data, with a veterinary surgeon. To schedule an appointment at Animal Specialty & Emergency Center, please call (310) 473-5906.

More information can be found at:

http://www.petmd.com/dog/conditions/musculoskeletal/c_dg_cranial_cruciate_ligament

