

Cruciate Ligament Disease

The cruciate ligaments are found within the knee, or stifle, joint, and are very important to help stabilise the knee when weight is put through the leg. They are the only ligaments in the body that are found within a joint. These ligaments can be weakened if your dog has cruciate ligament disease, and can eventually rupture completely. Cruciate ligament disease is more common in certain breeds such as Labradors and Rottweilers, but can affect any breed. They can also be damaged after an accident or fall, the classic example being falling down a rabbit hole.

If your dog has cruciate ligament disease, your vet will carry out x-rays to help determine whether surgery is required or not. Whether treated conservatively or surgically, physiotherapy is a vital part of your dog's rehabilitation.

The sooner your dog starts physiotherapy treatment, the better the results will be; physio should start as soon as your dog is diagnosed. If your dog needs surgery, physio before surgery will help strengthen your dog in preparation for the operation, and will aid in a quicker recovery. Immediately after the operation, physio should be utilised as it helps to reduce swelling and pain, and maintain strength whilst the limb is not being used as much as normal.

As your dog heals, and pain reduces, you will be given exercises to do with your dog at home. These exercises are prescribed specifically to your dog, but are designed to ensure your dog starts using the bad leg as normally and fully as possible as soon as possible. As dogs have three other legs they can rely on, they often find it easier to not use the bad leg properly, even after it has healed. However, this would put extra pressure on the rest of the body and can cause more problems down the line, so we need to educate your dog not to do this.

Overall, physiotherapy will help to reduce pain, improve function and get your dog back to being the dog you know again, quicker.

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