

Lameness

Niles Animal Hospital and Bird Medical Center
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Overview

Any decrease in an animal's ability to bear weight on a limb or a decrease in the normal mobility and function of a limb can be considered lameness. Lameness can be extremely subtle or profound, affecting one limb or several limbs. It can be intermittent or constant, worse in the morning, worse at night, worse after rest, worse after or during exercise.

There is no breed, age or sex predilection for lameness. There are many causes of lameness from muscle injury, broken bones, arthritis, ligament injury, tumors or nerve damage, inflammation of growing bones in young puppies. For example, lameness may be associated with a traumatic event, such as being hit by a car, or it may develop gradually, as in a bone tumor in an affected leg. The underlying cause of a lameness may be life threatening or it may be detrimental to a good quality of life such as debilitating and painful hip dysplasia and its associated arthritis.

Diagnosis and Treatment Notes:

- Lameness is typically diagnosed through history and physical examination findings. Determining the cause of the lameness requires further testing such as a neurologic exam, x-rays of the affected area, joint taps, ultrasound, CT, MRI, biopsy or specialized x-rays using dye.
- Treatment depends on the underlying disorder, severity of the disease, your individual pet, and your veterinarian. Treatment may include rest, anti-inflammatory medications, pain medication, antibiotics or surgery. Discuss treatment details when your pet is evaluated and the underlying condition causing the lameness is diagnosed.

What to Watch for*:

- Inability to walk or run normally
- Reluctance to perform normal activity, like going up or down stairs
- Refusing to place any weight on a leg
- Pain

** Please notify us if you notice any of the above signs or if you have any questions!*