

Lumbosacral Disease

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Overview

Lumbo-sacral disease is a term used to describe compression of the nerve roots and spinal cord as they pass through the lumbo-sacral portion of the lower spine, which is the lower back near the hips.

There are a variety of causes of lumbo-sacral disease. It can be congenital (present at birth) or acquired (developed after birth); thus, dogs may show clinical signs at any age. Lumbo-sacral disease is most common in large breed dogs, particularly German shepherds.

The disease is characterized by marked back pain, which can become excruciating and severely debilitating, and hind leg weakness. Because the nerves that supply the bladder, rectum and anus pass through this region, urinary and fecal incontinence can result.

Diagnosis and Treatment Notes:

- Lumbosacral disease is generally diagnosed by a thorough physical examination including a neurologic and orthopedic exam and x-rays of the spine. In some cases, an electromyogram, myelography or CT/MRI may be suggested.
- Treatment depends on the severity of the disease, your individual pet, and your veterinarian. Medical management consists of rest, anti-inflammatory medication and antibiotics. If medical therapy is not effective, surgery may be necessary. Discuss treatment details when your pet is diagnosed with this condition.

What to Watch for*:

- Pain when lying down and getting up
- Reluctance to move
- Worn nails
- Inappropriate urination

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

