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Hip Dysplasia

Description: Hip Dysplasia (HD) is a widespread degenerative disease of the hip joint. It involves the improper fit of the head of the femur into the hip joint socket (acetabulum) of the pelvis. Because of the ill-fitting hip joint, secondary osteoarthritic changes occur, and the disease becomes progressively more severe as the animal ages. Although the dog may not show clinical lameness while it is young, lameness and pain with difficulty in rising and in running generally develop as the animal matures.

Age of Onset: If severe, the disease may start as early as 3 - 4 months of age, and in over 95% of the cases, it occurs before 2 years of age.

Diagnosis: Radiographic evaluation of the hip joints has been accepted worldwide as the diagnostic method of choice. Palpation of the hip joint has been used as a diagnostic technique for HD, but 3 separate studies have shown it to be less accurate than a radiograph at 12 months of age for diagnosing the disorder.

Treatment: No treatment has clearly been shown to stop progression of the disease. In the past, cutting the pectineus muscle, diet, limited exercise, and Vitamin C were said to prevent or decrease the severity of the disease, but none have been shown to do so in nonexperimental situations. Medication may be useful during periods of acute pain. Total hip joint replacement will decrease pain and increase function in severe cases, and total resection of the head and neck of the femur may be helpful in small breeds.

Mode of Inheritance: Hip dysplasia is inherited as a polygenic trait: i.e. more than one pair of genes is required to cause the disease, although the exact number required is unknown. HD occurs in more than 100 breeds.

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