

Author of the 5 Star Rated: Home Rehabilitation Guides for Pet Owners

DOGS CRY

DON'T

**DISPELLING THE MAJOR MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT JOINT PAIN IN DOGS,
TEACHING YOU WHAT TO LOOK FOR,
AND IMPROVING DOGS LIVES FOREVER**



James St.Clair, DVM.

Dogs Don't Cry

The 12 Subtle Signs Your
Dog Is in Pain and What
to Do About It

Dr. James St. Clair
TopDogHealth.com

Dogs Don't Cry

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Dedication

When I decided to share with some of my thoughts and insights into the world of dog pain, I never dreamed that it would materialize into a tangible instructional book on the topic that would affect so many dogs' lives. The ability to follow your passion without inhibition is only enhanced tenfold when you have an amazing support structure which I am so fortunate to have.

First, I have to thank my parents who had immense patience with me over the years and gracefully nudged me along, quietly helping me manifest my best self.

Second, and most dear to my heart at this point in my life, I would like to thank my gorgeous wife and four children who effortlessly believe in my mission to help as many dogs and their parents as I can possibly reach. I love you all so dearly and I live in gratitude every day of my life.

Introduction

A Letter from the Author

Dear Pet Parent,

If you are like me, you love your dog – or dogs – with all your heart. In fact, you love them as if they were your own children, and, in a way, they are. That said, there is one thing that I know for sure as a parent of four children and three dogs: I would never want to see *any* of them in pain.

Here is what I believe:

- I believe that no pet should ever have to suffer in pain.
- I believe that the key to preventing chronic suffering and pain in dogs is to teach pet owners, like yourself, *exactly* what to look for.
- I believe that knowledge is essential to easing and eliminating the pain our dogs often endure – most of the time in silence.
- I believe that the more you know and the earlier you can identify problems, the less your dog will have to suffer.
- I believe that safe, natural solutions should be the first line of defense before resorting to pharmaceuticals. I also believe that, in the appropriate circumstances, the right medications can be life-changing for you and your dog.

If you agree with these beliefs, then we are on the same page, and the information that I have to share with you in this book is going to be life-changing for both you and your pet.

For over a decade I have been surveying pet owners about pain perception in their dogs, and what I found is that greater than 90% of them actually have no idea how to tell if their dog is in pain or not. Most people *think* they know, but the reality is that they are focusing on the wrong things.

This book will clarify any misconceptions by educating you on what I call The 12 Most Common Silent Signs of Joint Pain in Dogs and offer solutions on how best to help your dog.

My goal is very simple: To educate pet owners, like yourself, on how to see the early signs of pain and then give you the tools to address them so that your dog never has to suffer.

Sincerely,

Dr. James St. Clair, DVM

“Dr. J”

Veterinary Medical Director

TopDog Health

Chapter 1: Kali's Tale

A True Story to Learn From

Misdiagnosis followed by clarity, hope, and the right plan led to years of life that may never have been realized

How did I get started on my path of hyper focusing on joint health in dogs? Why make it my life's mission to provide pain relief in this particular arena? Why www.TopDogHealth.com? Before we get into the meat of what I have to teach you, I think it is important for you to embrace the story of one dog who changed the course of my life and who, hopefully, will also impact yours. Her name was Kali, and although she was extremely special, her story is all too common.

The first day of August 2004 was also the first day the doors opened at our newly constructed TopDog Canine Rehabilitation and Fitness facility in Hamden, Connecticut. It was the culmination of a lifelong dream and a ton of debt, but it was a new, state-of-the art, 2,400-square-foot facility with all the bells and whistles. Like any new business owner, I was super excited that first day – ready to take on the world, change dogs' lives, and provide a much-needed service to my local veterinary colleagues.

The services that we were providing made complete sense to me, and I assumed that other veterinarians felt the same way. Expecting a flood of traffic that first day, I was quickly humbled as I sat patiently twiddling my thumbs. Morning, noon, lunch break, and mid-afternoon passed without a single customer until finally, at 5:15 PM, the door

slowly opened, and a kind-faced gentleman walked inside. Right behind him was his dog, an eight-year-old German Shepherd, literally dragging her hind legs while struggling to make her way through the door.

I clearly remember the uncertainty on both of their faces. I had no idea that on my very first day, my very first patient would be 'the one' that set the course for my entire career. In hindsight, I have to wonder... how lucky was I?

The dog's owner's name was Paul, and the minute he began talking, tears welled up in his eyes as he told me the story of his beloved German Shepherd, Kali, and how he came to find me at my new rehabilitation facility.

Kali's strength and function in her hind legs had slowly been deteriorating over the last six months. Paul's veterinarian, and even his family, had been trying to convince him that her condition was hopeless and that it was Kali's "time." Both camps suggested that Paul should put her to sleep. Unfortunately, a wheelchair wasn't an option for them.

Kali had been given a diagnosis of Degenerative Myelopathy by the family veterinarian. Degenerative Myelopathy (DM) is a fairly common neuromuscular disorder found in German Shepherds, a condition that causes them to progressively lose function of their hind legs.

It starts with a slight scuffing of the hind leg nails then progresses to a full "drunken sailor" walk in the hind legs. Most of the time it is a slowly progressing disease that eventually leads to the dog's complete inability to use the hind legs and, eventually,

incontinence. In the veterinary community it is commonly accepted as an untreatable disease.

I was young and naive at the time I met Paul and Kali, but no doubt a hopeless optimist. In my simple mind, I thought if Kali had been progressively losing strength in her hind legs, based on her diagnosis, she should not be in any kind of pain.

Hypothetically speaking, if I simply served as a personal physical trainer and exercised Kali aggressively, just maybe she could rebuild muscle and regain some function in those rear legs. Just maybe I could help Paul and Kali beat this thing or at least stabilize her. When I explained all this to Paul, it made sense to him, and he agreed that it was worth a shot.

We worked hard – and Kali worked even harder – every session, two times a week. As with anything in life, when you work hard, you expect to see results, yet I distinctly remember Paul coming in after six sessions and saying to me that it didn't seem to be working, Kali was still dragging herself around, and she did not appear to have built any muscle mass in her hind legs.

Was I wrong? I wondered. *Was the advice of Kali's veterinarian right?*

Paul and I discussed his options to either keep trying or believe what others were telling him and put Kali to sleep. Resolutely, Paul chose to push on. In total dismay, the door opened on that seventh session, and guess who came walking through the door: Kali, The Queen, walking on all fours. No doubt, it wasn't the prettiest walk I'd ever seen, but she was up and walking. Paul and I both cried. Neither of us could believe it.

After that session, I asked Paul if he could bring Kali to my hospital for the day. It turns out that Kali's veterinarian had never taken any X-rays previously, and I wanted to X-ray her head to toe to see if there was a good reason for this recent turn of events.

Surprisingly, the results of the X-rays were not at all what I expected. In fact, Kali did not have DM at all. What she did have was severe arthritis in both of her knees, some of the worst I had seen in my short career at that time.

That day, it all finally clicked for me. I finally got it: Kali had been suffering with joint pain for a long, long time, and no one ever knew; not her family, the veterinarian, or even myself. But there must have been evidence, right? Sadly, as is so often the case, her early signs of joint pain were most likely passed off as signs of her just getting older. Subsequently, the later signs of hind-end weakness were misinterpreted as Degenerative Myelopathy, most likely because it is a classic German Shepherd condition. Note: At this time blood or genetic testing for DM, was not available.

Because of daily chronic pain, Kali had been slowly deteriorating, moving around less and less and sleeping more and more. We have all heard the saying, "If you don't use it, you lose it." Well, Kali lost more and more muscle in her hind legs. Eventually, she lost so much muscle that she reached what I now call "The Critical Mass," which I define as "the minimal amount of muscle mass necessary to support the skeletal structure."

Muscle atrophy is generally not a fast process; it is a slow and gradual one. Since the skeletal system

is supported by muscle, there is a critical point at which you have lost so much muscle that you simply are not able to get up anymore. That's when you've reached The Critical Mass.

From that point forward, everything changed for both Kali and myself. Until we had rebuilt substantial muscle mass back into her hind legs, Kali was started on a comprehensive joint supplement and an aggressive pain-management protocol. Kali went on to live another four years of life in comfort and happiness. It was amazing, especially considering the sad sight I witnessed when she (barely) walked into my clinic that first day. Not to mention the fact that several people had recommended putting Kali to sleep.

She was my angel, and I was hers.

As a young veterinarian, I was sincerely humbled by my experience with Kali. I learned never to just take another doctor's diagnosis as gospel and, instead, to make my own conclusions based on facts; diagnostic evidence; and my own, personal experience. I became obsessed with learning the early detection signs of joint pain and sharing them with as many pet owners as I could. I went on to work with some incredibly smart and talented individuals to develop a joint health supplement, as well as, a handful of other products to help dogs like Kali.

To this day, it still bothers me that this poor dog had to silently suffer for years and that she was completely misdiagnosed because of quick stereotyping and lack of proper diagnostics. From that point forward, I made it clear to myself that a situation like this was never going to happen under

my watch again. I am forever grateful for everything that you taught me, Kali, and because of you, we are improving other dog lives.

One dog at a time...

Since 2007 I have helped well over 60,000 dogs recover from major orthopedic surgeries and thousands of other dogs suffering with joint-related issues. My goal is very simple: Improve as many dogs' quality of life as I can, by empowering pet owners through education, so that they can take their pets' health into their own hands and not be passive parents but active, educated parents.

Chapter 2: Not My Dog

Why 90% of Pet Owners Have No Idea Their Dog Is in Pain

For over a decade I have routinely asked pet owners one simple question: Do you think your dog is in pain? Nine out of ten of them quickly give me a very definitive, “NO!”

When I ask them, “How do you know that your dog is not in pain?” the answer is always the same: “I know because he/she does not cry or whimper.”

What’s even crazier is that even if their dog is limping, holding one leg up, or struggling to walk, the majority of pet owners still do not put two-and-two together. How can this be? After all, if a person were limping, whether he vocalized his pain or not, we would quickly assume that he was hurting. Yet when it comes to our pets, for some reason we simply don’t see it!

What this tells me is that there are millions of pets all across the United States and tens of millions across the world that are silently suffering, and no one is listening properly.

In one sense this can be very upsetting. Or it can be viewed as an opportunity to change the world and people’s perceptions in the future. I choose the latter.

The truth is that even though these pet owners’ dogs are suffering silently in pain, I truly believe it isn’t the pet owners’ fault that they don’t recognize the inevitable warning signs. They simply don’t see them because they have not been taught to see them.

And they're not alone. In fact, even many veterinarians have the wrong perception of how to interpret pain in animals – and they are trained experts in animal health, with years of schooling in animal science and behavior. Look how easily Kali's veterinarian misdiagnosed her joint pain and how quick he was to recommend putting her to sleep!

In fact, it was not too far in our recent past that veterinarians did not even provide pain medications to cats during – or after – they performed declaw surgery. For decades, veterinarians were removing the third phalanx (i.e. the end of the cat's fingers) to prevent cats from destroying indoor furniture and not providing any kind of pain medication at all. Imagine going through a surgical procedure where all of the ends of your fingers were removed and not having any pain medications before, during, or after surgery. Not only would you scream bloody murder, but you'd refuse to endure such a medieval procedure.

Unfortunately, our pets don't have that luxury.

In fact, because the cats undergoing the surgery did not cry, whimper, or otherwise vocalize their pain, it was assumed that they were not suffering at all. It was widely assumed, in fact, that animals have a different threshold for pain than people, that they do not feel pain like we do.

Thankfully, the veterinary community finally figured out the truth and changed their policies on providing well-rounded pain management for all animals undergoing surgical procedures.

When it comes to your dog, you need to understand that dogs only cry or whimper when

they are in extreme pain, and, even at that, they only cry or whimper for a short period of time before they internalize the pain. Dogs who deal with chronic (i.e. ongoing, daily, lasting) pain don't cry or whimper.

I repeat: Dogs who deal with chronic pain don't cry or whimper.

So the real question is: Why don't we see this pain in our pets? How can we miss the signals and signs that they are hurting? Why do they internalize when they are in so much constant, even chronic, pain? The answer is simple and explained in one very large word: anthropomorphism.

Anthropomorphism is defined in the Webster's Dictionary as follows:

“... described or thought of as being like human beings in appearance, behavior, etc., considering animals, objects, etc., as having human qualities.”

What this means is that we try to interpret our pets' emotions or behaviors as if they were human emotions or behaviors. In other words, we expect our pets to show or communicate signs of pain the same way humans do.

In most cases, of course, humans who are in pain cry or whimper. We don't suffer in silence. In fact, when in pain, humans usually complain, complain, and then complain some more. We have to tell everyone that we are in pain. Why do we do this? Basically, we do it because we want others to feel bad for us. By talking about it openly, honestly, and frequently, our social brains think we can deal with our pain better. It is soothing to know others feel

bad for us, and if we can't feel better physically, at least we can take some mental comfort.

Our pets, however, deal with pain entirely differently than we do. What we have to remind ourselves (on a daily basis) is that our dogs are not humans – although we often assign them such feelings and treat them, quite naturally, like part of the family. Yet, family or not, our dogs are actually very different from us and, as such, deal with pain much differently. We need to simply accept that as fact.

If there is one thing I want you to take away from this book so far, it is this: Please know that, most of the time, your dog will not cry or whimper when they are in pain. They do not express suffering as we humans do; hence, they will not “complain” the way we humans do. Instead, they suffer silently! So the question for all dog lovers becomes: How can we identify if our dog is in pain?

In this book we are specifically talking about joint pain; therefore, the answer to this question is that you need to learn what I call The 12 Silent Signs of Joint Pain that I am going to present to you, sign-by-sign and pain-by-pain, in the following pages.

If you learn all 12 of these silent signs of joint pain, you will have the power and knowledge of early detection. The earlier the detection, the less suffering your dog has to experience before finding relief.

Chapter 3: The 12 Most Common Silent Signs of Joint Problems in Dogs

Since 2004, through discussions with hundreds of pet owners, I have been putting together a list of silent signs of chronic joint pain in dogs.

As a result, I have identified and confirmed 12 of the most common signs or presentations of dogs who are dealing with chronic joint pain – as well as several other signs that generally indicate you should look closer at the top 12.

As you read through the following signs, keep your own, personal dog in your mind. Take a moment before, during, and after reading each sign to think about a few things:

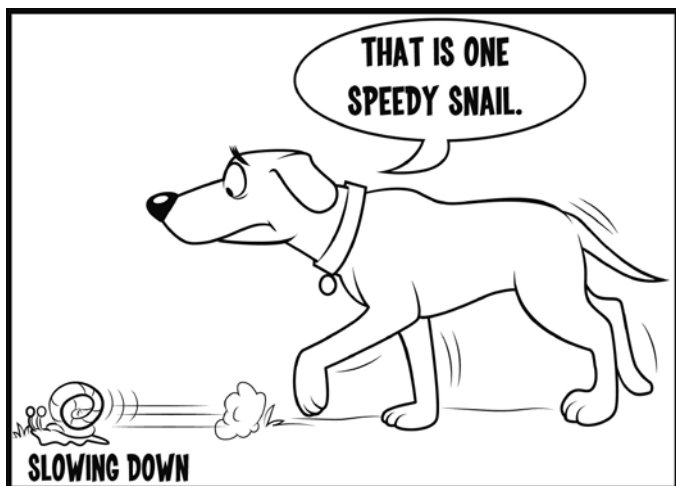
Does my dog do this?

Am I missing anything here?

How long has this been going on?

When was the last time I saw him/her do that?

My last bit of advice is this: Don't do this alone. Involve your spouse, kids, and other family members as well. If you're not seeing these signs, share the list with them, and see if maybe they have seen one of these 12 signs.



The First Sign: Slowing Down

As our dogs age, we assume that they inevitably 'slow down'. Though this can be true in some circumstances, it isn't always the complete story. In many cases, your dog is slowing down because he is in chronic pain. Over time, dealing with this day-to-day pain begins to wear them out, and, naturally, they begin to slow down as a result.

The lesson to be learned is this: If your dog is showing signs of 'slowing down', don't just assume that age is creeping up on them. Instead, make sure that your dog is not dealing with some chronic ache or pain that is slowly sucking the wind out of their sails.



The Second Sign: Slow to Get Up or Get Down

Throughout the course of a typical day, our dogs are constantly either sitting or lying down. A healthy, pain-free dog will do these normal actions quickly and dozens of times a day without any hesitation. For a reference point, think back to when your dog was a puppy or even a younger version of himself. Getting up and down was easy as 1-2-3 without any hesitation. On the other hand, for a dog dealing with chronic joint discomfort, these simple actions can often be daunting, exhausting, and painful tasks.

The key is to not focus on the extremes. In the worst cases of joint pain, even a completely untrained eye can tell that a dog is struggling to get up. But in the case of your dog in their current state, at rest and at play, you want to be able to identify the subtle and early changes that may or may not be occurring.

The reality is that, in every sense, you know your dog best. If you really focus on the energy of your dog and watch them go from standing to sitting or vice versa, you can often sense that there is a change, sometimes gradual, sometimes drastic. Here are some observations to make about your dog, and some questions to ask while doing so:

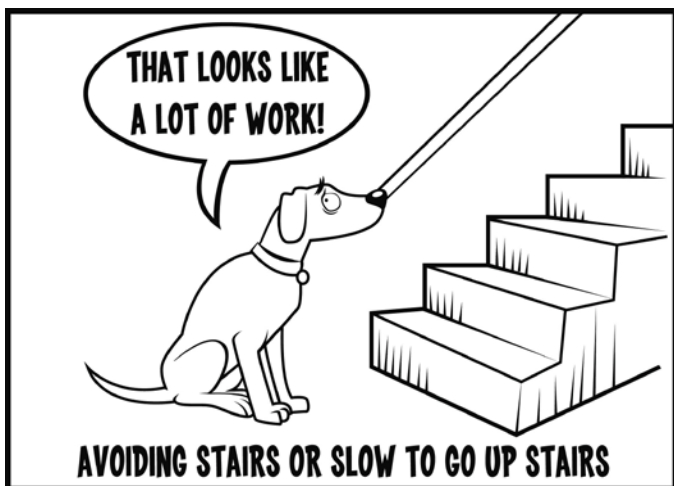
Are they thinking about sitting? If so, you will notice a telltale pause in their action.

Do you notice that they 'thump' when sitting down? In this scenario, your dog is not fully in control of the sitting process as much as he used to be and just kind of 'let's go' until his hind end hits the ground.

When your dog goes to lie down, do they 'walk' themselves into a laying position? In other words, instead of just lying down like they used to, do they beat around the bush a bit by slowly walking themselves down instead?

When you ask your dog to get up, do you notice any hesitation in the process of lifting their body off the ground? In this scenario, your dog may look at you and pause, or consider getting up first.

Often when I ask these questions to my clients, they confirm that they notice these signs, yet they still do not put two-and-two together and understand that there is a reason for this, or even that a problem exists in the first place. Unfortunately, in most cases the problem is chronic joint discomfort.



The Third Sign: Avoiding Stairs or Slow to Go Up Stairs

This is a sign that should blatantly tell you that there is a problem, but again, is often overlooked by many pet owners. In this case, what was once the normal, easy task of going up and down stairs, quickly becomes a challenge for dogs dealing with chronic joint pain.

In the early stages of this sign, you might notice that your dog slightly hesitates prior to going up the stairs. It almost seems as if they need to muster the energy or convince themselves that they can actually do it.

In the later stages, you may notice that your dog actually has to 'bunny hop' to get up the stairs. In other words, instead of using each hind leg independently to push off of a stair, they use both hind legs together. If you notice this in your dog, there is a problem for sure.



The Fourth Sign: Avoiding Jumping into the Car or onto Beds or Couches

Like stair avoidance, the fourth sign of chronic joint pain should be a more obvious one to detect. But again, as with nearly all of these signs, the early stages can be subtle.

This is the first sign that I noticed with my own dog, Albert, a Boston terrier. One day he simply hesitated to jump up into my car which was totally unlike him. Albert was always an extremely active dog running and biking with me, never showing any signs of a problem. Him not jumping into the car alerted me that there was a problem and after taking radiographs of his hips, knees, and spine, we discovered there was a problem. Not only did he have early signs of arthritis in his hips, but he also was developing arthritis in his lower spine, called spondylosis.

If your dog used to easily jump up into the car or onto your bed or couch and is now no longer doing that or they're doing it with hesitance, it's a clear signal to you that there is a problem.

You may decide to give it a few days to see if it resolves, maybe even give them an anti-inflammatory during this time. But if this continues then this clearly is a sign that there is a problem that needs further investigation from your veterinarian.



The Fifth Sign: Sleeping More and/or Sleeping Longer

Oftentimes a pet owner will notice their dog is sleeping more, especially in the morning, similar to a teenager who doesn't want to get out of bed before school. This might be after a day of excessive exercise, or it can become the normal, everyday behavior, but the key thing to notice is that this extra sleeping-in has not always been the norm. The sign here is that there has been a change in behavior, particularly with regards to your dog's sleep pattern – from less to more.

Pet parents will also notice that when their dog finally decides to get up, they will often go through some kind of ritualistic stretching behavior or be slow getting out of bed.

No doubt this can be very subtle at first, and even young dogs, who you would assume aren't necessarily candidates for joint problems, will

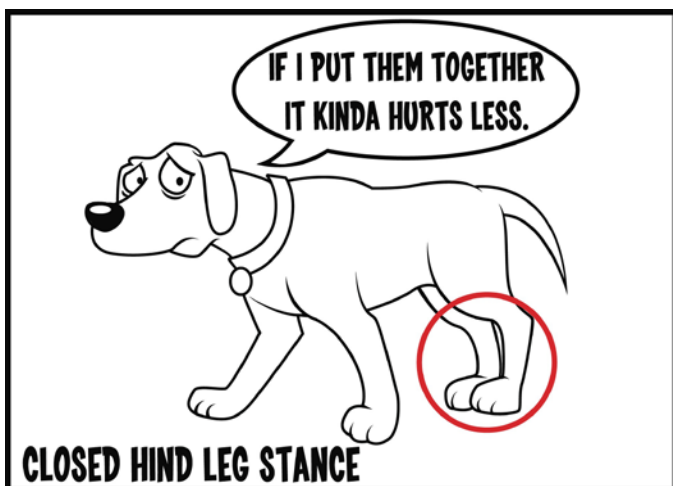
display this exact same behavior when experiencing pain, they simply can't vocalize. This is clearly an early warning sign of chronic discomfort.



The Sixth Sign: Reluctance to Go on Walks or Walking Less Than Usual

Most of us walk our dogs on a regular basis. That being said, in the early stages of joint health problems, you will gradually begin to notice that your dog simply will not walk as far as he used to, or they may actually sit down and quit during the walk. If this starts happening on a frequent basis, it may be a sign that there is an underlying joint problem.

In a scenario where you have a fenced-in backyard and rarely pull out the leash for a determined walk, you may notice that your dog, who used to go out into the yard and be active, is simply not doing this anymore. They are now only going out to do their business and then either asking to come right back in or simply laying down after they go to the bathroom. Either way, something is amiss and needs to be investigated.



The Seventh Sign: Displaying the Closed Hind Leg Stance

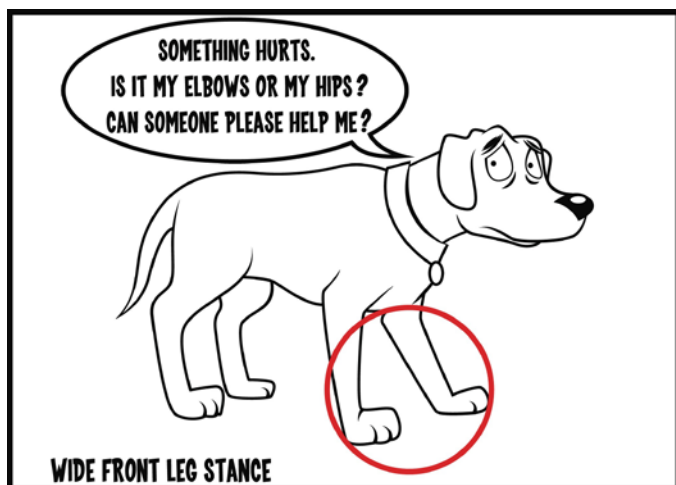
This is a very profound sign that takes a bit of a critical eye on your part, but if noticed, tells you there clearly is a problem with your dog's hind leg joints or even lower back. Again, this is often very subtle in the early stages of chronic joint pain, but still one of the most powerful indicators on this list.

Here is the best way to look for this sign: When your dog is in your house or even outside and goes from walking to a standstill, pay close attention to their hind legs. If they are normal, they will keep a wide hind leg stance, but if there is a problem with the hind legs, you will notice when they stop that they will very subtly shift their hind legs closer together, essentially bringing them more under the center of the body.

Why does this happen? Dogs do this in order to take weight off of their hind legs individually and

use them together as one, which is more comfortable for them. At the same time, they then shift some of their weight forward to be carried by the more comfortable front end.

In the later stages of joint disease, when these dogs are really suffering in pain, they will often even walk with the hind legs almost completely together and a massive amount of body weight shifted to the front end.



The Eighth Sign: Displaying the Wide Front Leg Stance

When it comes to the front legs, things get a bit more complicated. Often it is harder to determine the source of pain and, even more importantly, whether the problem with the front leg (or legs) is primary or secondary to a hind leg problem. This becomes particularly challenging without the expert advice of your veterinarian, who is skilled at performing a thorough orthopedic exam and has access to diagnostic x-rays.

With this eighth sign, however, we are looking for any subtle change in how our dogs carry their weight in the front legs. A dog with normal, comfortable front legs should have their elbows positioned fairly close to their rib cage, except, of course, in the case of, say, an English bulldog, who naturally carries a much wider front leg stance.

In general, for the vast majority of breeds, the shoulders and elbows should not be sticking out. As always, it is best to look at your dog with a critical eye and compare the positioning of the front right leg to the front left leg, observing them from the front and also from the back.

If you notice that your dog has a wider front leg stance isolated to one side, then this should be a clear sign that there is a problem with either the shoulder or the elbow. If you notice that they have a wider stance on *both* front legs, then this would either indicate problems with both shoulders and elbows, or, additionally, it might be a sign of compensation because your dog has pain in their hind end. In the case of this second scenario, you should be able to identify one or more of the other signs specific to the hind legs.



The Ninth Sign: Bunny Hopping

Of all the silent signs we'll cover here, this is probably the one most commonly referred to by veterinarians simply due to the ease of the visual analogy. From my experience when discussing it with my clients, however, the vast majority of them have never seen their dogs "bunny hopping" or, if they have, have never put two and two together. Yet, if you can slow your eyes down and really closely and critically evaluate your dog's form when they are running around the back yard or at the dog park, this can be one of the most powerful and early warning signs to identify.

If you think about the way a rabbit runs, they utilize both hind legs at the same time. In other words, they essentially hop to explode themselves forward. This doesn't just occur when they are running, of course. It also happens when they are slowly moving around your lawn nibbling on grass. Does that mean all rabbits have bad hips? Obviously not,

but in the case of your dog, hopping around like a bunny *would* be a crystal clear sign that there is a problem.

It is important to note that, when it comes to dogs, not all “bunny hopping” is abnormal. When they are starting from a standstill or a sitting position and want to accelerate quickly, many dogs will often use both hind legs together in the first few strides before transitioning to a more natural, alternating leg run. On the opposite spectrum, when a dog is at a full-out run, and I mean flying (think of a greyhound running at full speed), you will notice that they also use both hind legs together in addition to both front legs together as they fly through the air.

So if it is normal for some dogs to “bunny hop” at the beginning of acceleration and also at full speed, why even bring this up? The reason is because it is *not* normal to “bunny hop” anytime in between, and that is what you need to pay attention to. If your dog is “bunny hopping” while walking, jogging, or even when trying to go upstairs, then this is a sign that there is a problem.

I specifically look for this sign in my younger patients because it is by far one of the best ways to identify early signs of hip problems.



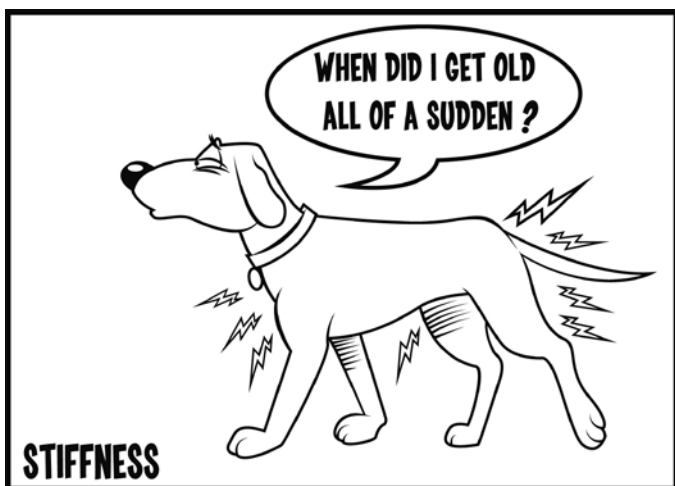
The Tenth Sign: Limping

Of course, you would think this is an obvious sign, but you would be surprised how many dog owners overlook this one. Yes, it is possible that the limp may be from a burr in the paw, or perhaps your dog hurt themselves on their latest walk. In many of these cases, we identify an underlying tick-borne disease, such as Lyme disease or anaplasmosis, to be the cause of the limp.

However, occasionally that limp is actually due to a dog aggravating an existing chronic joint problem that has otherwise gone undiagnosed. In other words, don't just assume it is something temporary or simple when it could be something ongoing and chronic. I'm not saying you should take your dog to the emergency room for a simple limp. Instead, stay open-minded, and if you notice that your dog is limping for longer than a few days, it would definitely be a good idea to contact your

veterinarian for an evaluation and, even better, an x-ray.

Limping can be a result of many different problems, but it is often an indicator of underlying chronic joint pain.



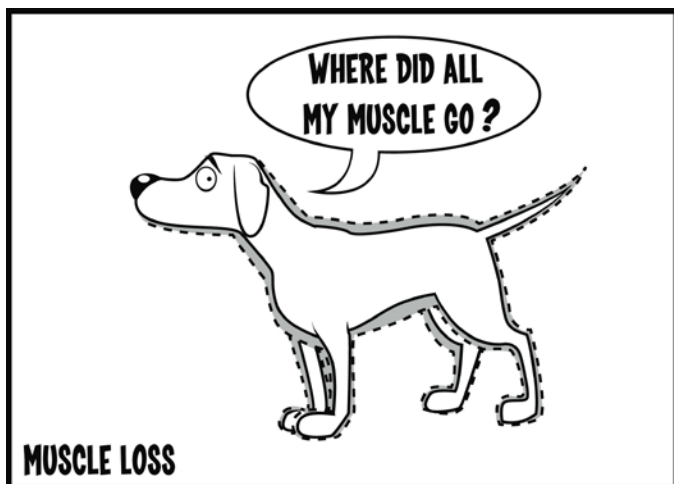
The Eleventh Sign: Stiffness

It is always amazing to me how often we, as pet owners, overlook stiffness in our dogs. No doubt it is one of the easier signs for pet owners to identify in their dogs, but it is also the number one sign that people pass off as “no big deal.” I think the reason for this is because, as a part of our normal, everyday lives, most of us experience stiffness to some degree or another. When I passed into my 30s, it seemed that all of a sudden I was a bit stiffer in the morning while getting out of bed. It took a little while and some minor stretching to warm up.

At first, I was as guilty as the rest of us, simply assuming that it was a normal part of aging. That is, until a few more acute episodes led me to a local chiropractor who took x-rays of my lower spine and, shockingly, diagnosed arthritis changes in my body. I have since addressed those issues through daily core-strengthening exercises and amazing supplements such as MSM and high-quality

omega-3 fatty acids, but the point here is this: Stiffness is not a normal sign of a healthy body. There is real reason for that stiffness, and it is up to us to get to the bottom of it for our pets.

Oftentimes, dog owners will notice their dog's gait may be a little more stiff than usual. Or you may notice that your dog is stiff after getting up from a lying down position, when they didn't used to be. Nine times out of ten, if it is happening on a daily basis, there is a reason for it. If you notice that your dog is stiff, it would be well worth a little investigation to identify the source of this chronic pain so that you can at least be informed and make some kind of action plan to combat it, just as I did for myself.



The Twelfth Sign: Muscle Loss

We are all familiar with the saying, "If you don't use it, you lose it." Both our bodies and our dogs' bodies are changing on a daily basis, adjusting to meet the demands that we place on them. For example, if you had to pick up a 100-pound box multiple times a day, then naturally you would build the necessary muscles to more efficiently pick up that 100-pound box multiple times a day. Well, the same is true for dogs.

In the case of dogs who have chronic joint health issues, as their condition slowly gets worse and they experience more and more pain and discomfort while moving, their desire to be active and move around throughout the day slowly decreases over time.

Naturally, the less they move, the less muscle the body needs, resulting in increased muscle loss, otherwise known as muscle atrophy. Often, if a dog

has one hip or knee that is bothering them, you will be able to appreciate that muscle loss if you were to simply *feel* both hind legs at the same time, comparing one to the other.

Therefore, it's a good idea to get into the practice of running your hands over your dog's body, especially the leg muscles, every once in a while. Everything should be strong and symmetrical. If it isn't, consult your veterinarian for a professional opinion.

Other Signs

In addition to The 12 Most Common Silent Signs of Joint Problems in Dogs, here are some other signs you may want to look out for to ensure that you are sensitive to your dog's signs and symptoms:

Joint Licking: If a particular joint is bothering your dog, he may begin to lick at it, especially during times of rest when he is just lying around. This is typically an act of trying to pacify the discomfort. Even if you don't actually see your dog doing this, look carefully: You may also notice a color change in the fur around this joint from saliva staining, which will often leave a brownish color to the hair.

Shaking or Trembling: If your dog is shaking or trembling more often than usual, especially at rest, this could be an indicator that there is underlying chronic pain.

Daily Habit Changes: Is your dog acting different lately? It could be due to chronic pain. For instance, among other daily habit changes to be aware of, your dog may show a decrease in normal appetite

or a change in social interaction. Your dog may also be isolating itself more than usual, etc.

Aggression: Chronic pain can cause emotional changes in your dog, including aggression. Obviously, this would be a red flag, especially for a dog who is normally very friendly and outgoing.

Other Vocalizations: Groaning or grunting when going to lie down, as well as other vocalizations, indicate the potential presence of pain, chronic or otherwise.

If your dog has one of these additional signs of pain, then most likely one or more of the 12 Most Common Silent Signs are already there as well, so it's important to be on the lookout.

Chapter 4: How to Be an Advocate for Your Dog's Joints

When it comes to the joint health of your dog, I will tell you right off the bat that you need to take this into your own hands because there is no better advocate for your dog than you. With that being said, you first need to have a broad understanding of all the pieces to the puzzle. There is far more to joint health than simply giving your dog joint supplements or non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs). Although what is going on inside the joint is extremely important, everything on the outside of the joint is equally as important.

Let's take a closer look: The musculoskeletal system is comprised of bones, muscles, tendons (which join muscle to bone), and ligaments (which join bone to bone). In addition, it also includes all of the other components of the joint itself, such as the joint capsule, cartilage, and joint fluid. All of these individual structures work together to keep your dog up and moving every day; therefore, we need to keep all of these structures healthy.

Makes sense, right?

The Scenario

Here is an all-too-common scenario: Rudy is a five-year-old Labrador retriever who weighs 105 pounds and lives the typical lifestyle of a domestic dog. He gets two to three walks a day and otherwise is fairly sedentary while his family is at work.

One day, while having a good ol' time in the backyard, Rudy injures himself and begins to limp on his left hind leg. He is quickly brought to his veterinarian and diagnosed with an ACL tear. His

veterinarian recommends surgery, which he has the following day.

Now, up to this point, Rudy has never shown any signs of joint health issues. During the surgery, the instability in his knee is corrected. He gets sent home with Rimadyl®, one of the many NSAIDS on the market, and some pain medication – Tramadol – for two weeks. As expected, Rudy recovers from surgery with the veterinarian's recommendations to walk him on a leash for several weeks, and, within eight weeks, he is back out in the yard, playing again.

But did Rudy fully recover? Does his family have a plan for his future now that he has had this injury? Does his family truly understand the repercussions of how this joint injury will affect his long-term health, or do they simply take their veterinarian's word for it and expect everything to be fine?

The problem with this scenario is that it is far too common. Never once was Rudy's family educated on the fact that everything from this point forward changes with regards to his long-term joint health, and his overall health and wellness, for that matter.

The Future

Eight months later Rudy has another accident, and this time he injures his other hind leg, the right hind leg. Yet again he has to have surgery for a torn ACL, and the same thing happens all over again.

Fast forward two years, Rudy is still 105 pounds, happy as ever, but his family becomes concerned that he seems to be having a harder time getting up and, overall, that he is not playing as much as he used to. He goes to his veterinarian again, who at

this time takes x-rays of Rudy's hips, knees, and spine.

The veterinarian explains that Rudy is developing arthritis in both his knees, in addition to his lumbar spine, and therefore prescribes him Rimadyl® again. As expected, this medication makes him feel better, and since he seems better while on it, his family continues to use it for the next several years. Everyone seems satisfied, everyone, that is, except Rudy, of course.

Could this scenario have been different? Could more have been done to help Rudy and his family at the time of his first injury?

Changing the Course

The answer to the last question is obviously yes. This scenario could have been much different for both Rudy and his family, and it all starts with a little education. Had the veterinarian, or even Rudy's family, taken the time to look at the bigger picture, i.e., a more holistic approach and planning for the many future issues that Rudy would develop over the years, this could have been avoided or at least potentially prevented.

To start, Rudy's excess weight issue should have been addressed much earlier on in his life. Statistics tell us that in the United States alone, 50% of all dogs are clinically overweight and, in many cases, obese. This statistic is absolutely astounding. For some reason, our society has decided to let go of a balanced diet and maintaining a healthy weight, not only for ourselves, but also for our pets. In 2002 Nestle Purina® released their 14-year-long Life Span Study that illustrated exactly

what many of us had already been preaching for years.

The results showed that, overall, dogs who were fed lean diets and maintained ideal body weights lived on average two years more than those dogs who were not kept at ideal body weights. All of these dogs, in the end, died of similar disease processes, yet the lean-fed dogs developed the problems two years later. Do you think that you would like to have your dog around for an extra two years? Two years...IS THIS A BIG DEAL TO YOU?

In the case of Rudy, the responsibility of his excess weight falls on the shoulders of both the veterinarian and the family. Either the veterinarian did not do a good enough job at communicating the importance of this issue or providing tangible solutions for the family, or the family just did not think that it was a serious enough issue for Rudy. Whatever the case, in the end, Rudy was the one who suffered.

Second, had the veterinarian emphasized to the family that Rudy's post-surgery rehabilitation was just as important as the surgery itself and that full recovery usually takes a full six months, there is a strong chance that Rudy would have never had the second injury. He would have been given the opportunity to rebuild the strength in his leg back to its original condition and would not have had to overcompensate to such a great extent with his other hind leg. It is this overcompensation that led to the second injury.

Third, had the veterinarian or even the family understood the power of certain natural ingredients, i.e., supplements that promote and maintain

optimal joint health, Rudy would have been much more likely not to incur further injuries over the years.

The Takeaway

As I stated in the first paragraph, you and only you are the best advocate for your dog. Therefore, it is up to you to gain an understanding and develop a plan that is really going to work for the lifetime of your dog.

Make sure to keep your dog at a healthy weight. Make sure that if your dog has an injury, seek professional physical rehabilitation advice to ensure the best long-term recovery. Understand what a full recovery actually means. Make sure that you exercise your dog on a regular basis to maintain muscle tone and flexibility. Last, but not least, make sure that you incorporate a well-balanced, high-quality joint support supplement into your dog's diet, one that is proven to be safe for your dog.

Chapter 5: Why Most Veterinarians Aren't Really Talking About This (Or, If They Are, It Is Often Too Late)

As a veterinarian, I make sure to carefully, specifically, and routinely examine the joints of every patient I see. This is my passion, so naturally I am hyper-focused on discovering any problems and educating my clients. Recently, I began thinking about why so many dogs with mild to moderate joint health issues go undetected by veterinarians. Are the veterinarians missing this? Is it the veterinarian's fault?

I think the simple answer is that many of these cases are not black and white situations and no doubt in the early stage of joint health deterioration, detection can be difficult. In addition, there are factors that can limit a veterinarian's ability to discover these early signs. Here are the top four reasons why I do not place all the blame on veterinarians themselves, and why I am so passionate about educating pet owners like yourself to get involved with early detection.

1. Time Limits

There is simply not enough time in a typical 15 to 20-minute wellness appointment to discuss everything you need with your veterinarian. During this limited time, your vet has to cover your dog's eye health, dental health, heart health, skin health, weight management, muscle skeletal health, parasite control and then, of course, address any other specific questions, issues or concerns you may have.

Therefore, unless you specifically bring one of these 12 Silent Signs to their attention, your veterinarian may never even know your dog is in pain and suffering. If you had more like 30 to 45 minutes to confer with your veterinarian, that might be a more adequate period of time to cover everything, but this is typically not the case. I am pretty certain that the average pet owner would not be happy paying \$150 per appointment for this amount of time. I know my clients wouldn't be.

By no means is this an excuse for your veterinarian to be incomplete in their examination of your pet. It is more of an attempt to point out their time limitations, and therefore, stress the importance to you, the pet owner, of being more informed and ultimately making the most use of your time while with your pet's doctor.

2. The “Adrenaline Factor”

I am sure you have experienced this phenomenon once or twice before: You bring your dog into the veterinarian for a problem that you have been noticing at home, such as a cough or even a limp, only to then have your dog not repeat it while in the veterinarian's office! I have clients tell me this all the time: “Doc, my dog was just doing it five minutes ago, and now, of course, they're not doing it.”

This is what I refer to as “The Adrenaline Factor.” I have even experienced this myself when I had my leg broken in two places during a state wrestling competition. Even after breaking my leg, I was able to walk out of the competition and drive home, only hours later finding myself in such excruciating pain that I was not able to put any weight on the leg.

How did I manage it? One word: adrenaline!

The reality is that your dog experiences the same phenomenon when they enter the doctor's office. Knowing that something is up and realizing that you're not exactly at their favorite park, your dog is stressed or nervous the minute you pull into your veterinarian's parking lot. As a result, their adrenaline kicks in, often quickly masking or hiding the problem you brought them there for. This would explain why, even if your dog was limping at home, they're suddenly 'fine' the minute you enter the doctor's office.

Again, I bring this point up to illustrate just how important your role is in your dog's overall health. If you learn to listen to your dog and become aware of the subtle changes that are occurring when your dog is home, you will be able to better guide your veterinarian, who often can be misled by a dog who is high on adrenaline.

3. Lack of Visible Evidence in a Small Space

The minute a dog walks into my exam room, I am watching their every step, analyzing their gait and making judgment calls with regard to their musculoskeletal health. There is a huge limitation here though. My exam rooms, like most doctor's offices are fairly small spaces.

It is simply not possible for me to take every patient outside to perform a true gait analysis, evaluate them going up and down stairs or getting in our out of the car, etc.

As I mentioned earlier about my own dog, Albert, he first showed me he was having a problem when he began asking me to help him get in and out of

the car. Now, mind you, all along Albert was still super active, running and mountain biking with me, otherwise seeming totally normal except for not wanting to jump into the car. It was not until I recognized that this behavior was different and decided to x-ray his hips and spine that I found the underlying reason for this behavior change; arthritis in his spine. Had I not paid attention to this change, I would never have known he actually had pain, and he would have gone on to suffer chronically and silently for a long time.

Identifying any of these 12 signs requires some degree of awareness on your part, and they can often only be observed by you as a change in habits or behavior over time. Therefore, paying attention to how your dog sits and gets up, how they navigate stairs, or their level of agility in leaping in and out of the car should all be common, everyday observations. At the end of the day, don't rely on your veterinarian to pick up on these subtle changes.

4. Lack of a Full Orthopedic Exam

This is where things get a little stickier. Though every licensed veterinarian has had the same basic training, it is important to understand that all veterinarians are not created equal.

As we all know, there are veterinarians who surpass their basic training to specialize in one particular body system. Take an ophthalmologist, for example, who only concentrates on the eyes. These individuals have gained years of additional training and special skills for this one body organ, the eye, but this would not necessarily be the right person to give advice to you about joint health. Yet

when it comes to your everyday general practitioner, even though they are versed, to some degree, in all aspects of animal health care, each individual still has his or her own individual strengths.

Where am I going with this? The point that I am trying to make is that when you bring your dog in for their annual or bi-annual physical examination, you need to pay close attention to how your veterinarian performs the physical exam. Does he cover all body systems? Does he do a complete orthopedic exam on your dog? Is he flexing and extending all major joints to evaluate comfort? If not, your dog may go another whole year without your veterinarian identifying the pain they are currently suffering from.

Fun Fact:

Here is a little trick I learned from my own dog trainer. When you discipline a dog and they respond, they will often stick their tongue out in a quick “licking” motion as an act of submission. I have translated this and used it in my own physical exams to identify pain. For instance, when I gently extend a dog's hip backward and they do this same licking behavior, it shows me that this dog may potentially have hip pain. When I notice this, I will extend my concentration and evaluation of that joint in hopes of identifying a problem early on.

The Takeaway

As you can see, there are many factors that potentially limit busy, modern veterinarians from truly uncovering the early signs of joint problems. Hopefully, this proves to you, more than ever, that you can't 100% rely on your veterinarian to uncover problems when it comes to your dog's health. In fact, they need you to help them. It is you, the parent, who needs to be an informed first-responder, and then, when you're fairly certain there's an issue, bring it to the attention of your dog's doctor.

That said, there is no doubt in my mind that the veterinary community needs to do a better job at educating pet owners about The 12 Most Common Silent Signs of Joint Problems in Dogs.

Unfortunately, at this point in time, there is a major lack of take-home educational resources available in most veterinary hospitals that focus on this kind of prevention.

By educating yourself, maybe you will bring this information to the attention of your veterinarian, and together we will improve the lives of thousands, if not millions, of dogs across the world.

Chapter 6: Management vs. Prevention - Where Does Your Dog Fit In?

What do you do with all of this information? How do you use it to move forward, helping your dog?

Based on observations while considering The 12 Most Common Silent Signs of Joint Problems in Dogs, there are two distinct “phases” your dog will fit into:

- **The Management Phase:** In this phase, your dog is in pain, and that pain needs to be managed through a variety of methods, including therapy, supplements, medications, surgery, or a combination of all four.
- **The Prevention Phase:** In this phase, your dog hasn't manifested any of the 12 warning signs, and you can focus on what you can do to prevent any future problems through general health and wellness changes.

How do you accurately categorize your pet into the right phase?

Let me first ask you a simple question: When I listed these 12 warning signs in the previous chapter, did you notice any of these issues in your dog? If you answered yes to that question, then your dog belongs in the Management Phase. If you answered no, then your dog belongs in the Prevention Phase.

Defining This Alone Will Change Your Dog's Life

Regardless of which category your dog falls into, you now know what to look for and how to categorize what may or may not be bothering your dog. Even if the news is grim and your dog must receive pain management, at least you know, and your pet's life can change for the better as soon as that treatment regimen is put in place.

If your dog isn't necessarily showing any of these 12 warning signs, you can hopefully avoid them by taking preventative measures that we'll talk about a little later in this book.

Either way, you've taken decisive steps to not only diagnose your pet, but make your veterinarian aware of what you're seeing so that you can work together to solve your dog's pain needs – now, or in the future.

The Takeaway

As much as we'd like them to, our dogs simply can't tell us that they're in chronic pain. And, as we've just seen, despite all the technology at their fingertips, even modern veterinarians themselves are often at a loss to identify the early stages of these common dog problems. It's up to us, dog lovers and dog owners, to be advocates for our pets and take matters into our own hands to help relieve their chronic pain.

Chapter 7: Understanding “The Pain Trial” and “Tweaking”

Now you know what to look for and how to classify whether your dog is in the Management or Prevention phase of their overall joint health. At this point you should now be asking yourself the following questions. “So, what’s next? How can I actually help my dog moving forward?”

Believe it or not, before we get into exactly what you can do, there are still two final concepts that I need you to understand, and I cannot stress enough the importance of understanding these. These two concepts are critical in so many ways.

They are:

1. The Pain Trial
2. Tweaking

To give you a better idea of what they entail, let me drill down deeper into each topic for you:

The Pain Trial: The Secret Way to Identify Pain in Your Dog

“Though I wish my (canine) patients could talk, oftentimes actions speak louder than words. Using a pain trial as a tool, we can almost make them talk to us through their improved function and behavior, and, to me, that is priceless.” ~ Dr. J

The reason I created The Pain Trial was simply out of necessity in my own practice. In the town where I

practice medicine, many of my clients have financial limitations. This makes it difficult for them to agree to every diagnostic test I recommend for their pets. Therefore, I have had to adapt and be creative about how I get to the end result of providing excellent medical care and improving the lives of their pets. Even when I identify one or more of the 12 Most Common Silent Signs in one of their pets and explain everything that is going on, many patients are often still cautious about how to proceed, financially-speaking.

Therefore, before I can ever convince many of them to invest money in more costly diagnostics like x-rays, I first have to prove to them that their dog is actually in pain. Once I do this, I have found it is much easier for them to understand the importance and value in taking the next step and investing in some diagnostics so that we know exactly what is going on in their dog's body. But up to that point, in their eyes at least, it can often seem like I'm trying to get them to do something unnecessary – which is, of course, far from the case.

Remember, people don't see the pain, and up until now there has never been a resource such as this one available to pet owners. Yet, before we go any further, I'd like you to answer these two simple questions for me: If you knew for sure that your dog was in pain, would it devastate you? Would you then be compelled to move forward with x-rays if you knew it could possibly relieve your pet's pain?

Of course you would! What dog lover wouldn't?

That's why I invented the concept of the Pain Trial for my patients. It's a way for my human clients to

‘see’ for certain, that their dog is suffering. It takes away the doubt or hesitation that causes them to delay valuable testing and it allows them to get the help their dog so desperately needs – and deserves.

The Pain Trial involves the following protocol: For my patients, in which I suspect pain, I will have my clients give their dogs an NSAID (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory) and an opioid called Tramadol, at the appropriate dosages. During this time, if the dog feels better, i.e., seems happier, is moving around more, or is more interactive and willing to do activities, then by simple deductive reasoning we would all agree that the dog is in some degree of daily pain without the treatment.

In fact, the difference is often like night and day as the dog begins to experience pain-free living for the first time in what could be a long time. Naturally, at the end of the trial, no dog owner wants to see their pet suffer again.

By proving to my clients that their dogs are in some degree of pain, they are naturally more receptive to my recommendation of taking a few x-rays to make certain where the problem exists and to what degree.

Why is the Pain Trial so important? Well, I can’t emphasize this enough: x-rays are really the first diagnostic step towards uncovering exactly what is going on inside your dog. And while they can be an additional expense beyond the cost of an average veterinarian visit, in the long run, it’s a small price to pay for your own peace of mind, not to mention a pain-free life for your pet.

The Pain Trial Is NOT for EVERYONE

Now, fair warning: If your dog clearly shows one or more of the 12 Most Common Silent Signs of Joint Pain, then it's ok to skip the Pain Trial and jump straight to taking x-rays of your dog. If it's clear your pet is in pain, you don't need to wait a whole week to move and take action on that. I am simply presenting the Pain Trial as just one option (and a great one, I might add) to help you determine whether your dog is in pain or not. And obviously, we both hope they aren't!

It is a fact that joint health deteriorates over time. It is a slow progression of the joints becoming worse and worse and worse over time, not overnight. That being said, it is vital that you understand that there is absolutely no one-time-only, silver-bullet cure for joint health issues. Instead, this is an evolution that requires your attention over time and will take time to heal properly.

Now that we understand the Pain Trial, let's move on to our second concept, which I call Tweaking.

Tweaking

Simply put, my definition of Tweaking is the adjustment or changing management of supplements, anti-inflammatories, pain medications, alternative therapies, or exercise regimen over time to maintain an optimal quality of life, optimal function, and optimal comfort for our dogs.

Why is this important? Because your goal is to make sure that your dog's joints feel good, that your dog is comfortable, and, finally, that your dog is not in pain. That being said, as I have mentioned

before and will mention again and again and again, managing joint health and comfort is a progression over time. Unfortunately, there is no one-shot-wonder that makes everything better for eternity.

When I began practicing veterinary medicine in 2003, I had a handful of experiences in the first year that I vowed to never have again. The biggest and most painful one was when I had to put an animal to sleep simply because they could not get up anymore due to a lack of management of chronic pain.

Though it was the shared fault of both the owner and myself, I always felt as if it was all my fault, simply because I did not do a good enough job educating and informing the owners about the alternatives and resources we have available to us to manage chronic pain. It was too late. At the end of the day, the buck stops here, and it is my responsibility to watch over my patients and free them from any form of suffering. The reality was, though, that like many veterinarians, I did not know all the ins and outs of pain management, nor did I know all of these early warning signs. On top of that, in our practice at that time, I was only seeing these patients once every 365 days for, at best, a whopping 15 minutes. How could I possibly protect them under those circumstances? At that time, we did not encourage twice-a-year physicals for our senior patients. That has all since changed, but those experiences weighed heavy on my soul.

So how does the concept of Tweaking apply to your life? The fact is that pet owners get into horrible situations like the one I described above when they have not been truly listening to their dogs, or paying

attention to the Silent Signs they've been sending them.

At the end of the day, it is the shared responsibility of both you and your veterinarian to identify changes early and then respond accordingly. The reality is that listening allows us to tweak your dogs' supplements, medications, and therapies so that they continue to thrive and do well and not be in pain. Even though you have now learned how to pick up on the early signs of pain, you still need to continue to pay attention to any further changes over time.

You may be thinking to yourself, "Well, Dr. J, that is why I have a veterinarian for my dog... they will tell me what to do." And you'd be absolutely right in assuming that, but, as we mentioned before, your veterinarian only has 15 minutes, at best 30 minutes, to determine if your dog is in pain. Let me ask you this question: If your dog is over the age of seven, are you scheduling twice-a-year physical exams? In most cases, I would imagine the answer is no. Making this one small shift would help your veterinarian tremendously in potentially identifying problems earlier.

The reality is that you have 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to carefully and compassionately monitor your pet in regards to potential joint pain or discomfort. The reality is that you know your dog better than anyone else, and, therefore, you need to know how to tweak your dog along toward optimal, long-lasting health.

I have a process that I created called "Managing Your Dog's Joint Health for a Lifetime." This

process is not meant to be an exact treatment plan for all dogs but instead to serve as an example.

Step 1: You identify there is a problem

Step 2: You start with effective, high-quality natural solutions, i.e., supplements

Step 3: Your dog does great for a period of time until they eventually start to slide backwards. Once you observe this change, with the guidance of your veterinarian, you tweak their plan. At this point you may start with an alternative therapy such as canine rehabilitation, acupuncture, stem cell therapy, or maybe you simply add a daily anti-inflammatory along with the supplements.

Step 4: Your dog is doing great again until they eventually start to slide backwards. You discuss this with your veterinarian, and you tweak their plan again.

By now you should get my point that pain management is a process that requires a changing plan over time. You don't just find a solution right away and stop; you keep going – keep tweaking – until you find the right solution at the right time for your dog. That said, throughout this process of change, you will always stick with your core foundation of utilizing a high-quality joint supplement that includes the essential ingredients to promote optimal joint health.

The Takeaway

Before we move on to the next chapter, let's pause to take stock of what we've learned so far in this book

- **You now know:** Dogs are silent when it comes to pain.
- **You now know:** What to look for using the 12 Most Common Silent Signs of Joint Problems.
- **You now know:** Your veterinarian is obviously critical in helping manage your dog's joint health, but you are also responsible, particularly when it comes to identifying the early signs of discomfort or outright pain in your pet.
- **You now know:** Whether your dog is in the Prevention Phase or the Management Phase, and knowledge is power.
- **You now know:** How to utilize a Pain Trial to confirm there is pain and then how to manage that over time with the concept of Tweaking.

Now that you know better, you can do better. And that's just what I plan to help you do in our next section.

Chapter 8: The Confusing World of Joint Supplements...Clarified

So what's next? Where do we go from here?

Whether you are in the Prevention Phase or the Management Phase of handling your dog's chronic pain, like all things in life, we have to start with a solid foundation or, as some would say, a solid core.

When it comes to joint health, that foundation – or core – starts naturally, where we utilize the best of what nature has to offer. If you are anything like me, I always want to know what I can do or use naturally first before I have to turn to pharmaceutical alternatives.

Don't get me wrong: There is no doubt that certain pharmaceutical drugs can be amazing and life-changing, but they have their time and place. For me, that time and place is after I have maximized using the best of what nature has to offer first.

So let's talk about that foundation and the world of joint supplements and omega fatty acids.

First off, it is a fact that there are a ton of these products on the market. However, the reality is that 90% of the companies making these products really have no business manufacturing or selling joint health products at all because they don't know the first thing about what optimal joint health requires, and, even more importantly, they don't understand the science behind quality raw materials. That said, anyone today can throw together a glucosamine joint supplement for dogs and sell it on the open market, thereby making it extremely difficult for consumers to know which ones are good or bad,

which work or don't work, and which are safe or potentially harmful for dogs. It can be very confusing to pet owners which to choose because they all seem to say they are the best, or are made with all-natural ingredients or are made in the U.S.A., etc.

Even worse, some of them make outright illegal claims – saying they cure diseases like arthritis – and consumers have no idea that this isn't the truth. If you find a company making these claims, you should report them because it is illegal. The reality is that there is no cure for arthritis; there is only management. The good thing is that slowly but surely these unethical companies are being caught by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or the National Animal Supplement Council (NASC), and in due time they will no longer exist.

I remember in my early days of being a veterinarian, this was extremely confusing for me. I had clients coming into TopDog with bags filled with bottles of supplements, and I would look at all of these products and think, "This is crazy!" For starters, the formulations were way off, and, even worse, the origins of the ingredients themselves were never listed.

What I soon discovered was that there were many companies saying their products were "Made in the USA," yet, when I investigated the sources of the ingredients (i.e., raw materials), I discovered that most of them were from China. It is crazy to me from an ethical standpoint that these companies have the audacity to import raw materials from foreign countries and then proudly say their products are made in the U.S.A., and consumers have no idea. Ask yourself this question. What is

more important; the origin and quality of the raw materials used to make the supplement or where those ingredients are put together (i.e. packaged)? Obviously, the important part is the quality of the raw materials themselves.

This was all occurring right around the time of the 2007 pet food scare that started with the melamine that was being used from China. Of course, we all know that this same scare even continues today with questions about certain food products with Chinese origins, yet many of these products are still being sold on the open market even today. That's scary, if you ask me.

Let me state this for the record: Obviously, not all ingredients from China or other countries are bad. It would be ignorant to make that kind of a blanket statement, but what I do know is this: The U.S.A. has far more regulatory layers that protect its consumers than other countries do, and, in general, the raw materials manufactured in the U.S.A. are more likely to be exactly what they say they are. That said, most good companies have internal quality control measures in place to disrupt any attempts of adulterated ingredients, yet as a consumer myself, I still feel that I should have the right to know where my ingredients are sourced from.

It was at this point that I realized I needed to take this into my own hands for my patients and the TopDog community. And so began a several-year-long quest to create the joint supplement that I would not only want for my patients, but in essence a product that I would trust giving to my own dogs.

After years of working with brilliant minds in the nutraceutical industry and scouring the U.S.A. for the best raw materials, TopDog Health ultimately created GlycanAid™ Maintenance and GlycanAid-HA™ Advanced joint health supplements.

Let me briefly tell you what makes our GlycanAid™ so special and why we are so proud of it:

- This formulation is the real deal for optimal joint health.
- All the ingredients are sourced from the best-of-the-best in the U.S.A.
- It is made in our GMP, FDA-approved facility in California.
- Because we use the best ingredients from the U.S.A., with a great formula, the supplement actually works – with amazing results from thousands of pet owners to back that up.
- It has hundreds of five-star reviews from consumers on Amazon and thousands of dogs benefiting from it today.
- It is completely natural, and rather than hide the list of ingredients, we boast them here proudly:
 - Glucosamine HCL: vegetarian source
Regasure®
 - Chondrotin sulfate: bovine trachea source
Chondropure™
 - Hyaluronic acid: Hyal-Flex™

- Methylsulfonylmethane (MSM):
PurforMSM®
- Cetyl myristoleate: CM-Complex™
- Ascorbic acid/Vitamin C: Ester-C®
- Great Salt Lake minerals: OmniMin™

As you can tell, we are very proud of GlycanAid™ and even more humbled by all of the dogs whose lives we have changed.

That said, GlycanAid™ is not the only quality product on the market, and I would never want you to think that. There are a small handful of good-quality joint supplements available, and, as always, it is best you contact your veterinarian to discuss it with them.

The Takeaway for Joint Supplements

First things first, when looking for the right joint supplement for your dog, please do not simply go to your local pet store and pick the first product you see or, even worse, make a buying decision based on pricing. It is always best to discuss this with your veterinarian or another well-versed animal health care professional who knows formulas and ingredients. Second, make sure the origins of the ingredients are clearly stated on the label, as we do with our product GlycanAid™. If the label does not clearly state this information, simply pick up the phone and call the company to ask them.

GlycanAid™ Guidelines:

If you are interested in trying TopDog Health joint supplements, here are some simple guidelines to follow that we have found yield the best results:

If your dog is less than seven years old and has not had significant joint issues so far, then GlycanAid™ Maintenance is the RIGHT choice.

However, if your dog is less than seven years old and has had joint issues or joint surgery, then GlycanAid-HA™ is the RIGHT choice.

Finally, if your dog is over seven years old, regardless of joint problems, GlycanAid-HA™ is the RIGHT choice.

Unlike most companies, here at TopDog Health, we only want people to use our products if they are 100% confident that they are the right products for their dogs and that they work. That is why we have a 100% satisfaction guarantee. At any point, if a consumer is dissatisfied or thinks that our product is not the best joint supplement for their dog, all they have to do is simply call us or email us, and we will refund them... no questions asked. Personally I think this is how all supplement manufacturers should do business.

Chapter 9: The Myth of Fish Oil Revealed

When it comes to omega-3 fatty acids, everyone thinks of fish oil, but when it comes to fish oil, I have a huge buyer beware warning.

What most people don't understand is that there are actually over 20 forms of omega-3 fatty acids found in nature, but when it comes to joint health, there are really 3 you need to pay attention to: EPA, DHA, and ETA. I will stick with the acronyms moving forward to make it easier because the proper scientific terms are long and complicated:

EPA = Eicosapentaenoic acid

DHA= Docosahexanoic acid

ETA = Eicosatetraenoic acid

What most people don't realize is that omega-3 fatty acids help to make up every cell wall in the entire body and help with the transport of everything that goes into and out of cells.

The Problem Is Pollution

The unfortunate reality is that in today's age our oceans are polluted; therefore, we need to be extremely careful which omega-3 supplements we use not only on our dogs, but on ourselves too.

1. Make sure that the omega supplement you choose is from a reputable source that third-party tests their fish oil. It is mandatory that they are tested to be free of pollutants and heavy metals. Generic omega-3s are not going to cut it!

2. Make sure you use the right dosage. Most consumers look at the label and assume that 1,000mg of fish oil means 1,000mg of effective fish oil, but this is far from the truth. As I mentioned previously, we need to be hyper-focused on the dosage of EPA and DHA when it comes to fish oil. One thousand milligrams of fish oil does not mean 1,000mg of EPA. In fact, the concentration of EPA and DHA in fish oil products varies immensely depending on the source and the quality of the oil.

According to a recent study published by veterinarian Dr. Bauer, the effective dose of fish oil needs to meet certain guidelines. The dose that is beneficial to your dog's joints is as follows: 100mg/kg of EPA. Therefore, if you want to calculate how much your dog would need of EPA, the calculation would look like this: If your dog is 50lbs, then that is 22.7kg = $22.7 \times 100\text{mg} = 2,270\text{mg}$ EPA.

Understanding What Rancid Means

Most people hear the word rancid and immediately think the oil has gone bad, yet the reality is that rancid actually refers to the oxygenation of the oil itself. You see, some omega-3 oils are actually very fragile; therefore, when they are exposed to oxygen they break down and lose their effectiveness. That said, if you are using a straight oil and not a capsule filled with oil, minimizing the exposure of the oil to the air is key. You can also help preserve the oil by keeping it in the refrigerator.

My Current Favorite Fish Oil

Of all the fish oil products on the market currently, my personal favorite is OmegaPet marketed by Nordic Naturals®. This oil is available in both capsules and the straight liquid form. Personally, I prefer the actual liquid over the capsule because it is more cost effective.

The Diamond in the Ruff We Discovered

A few years back, when our team at TopDog was looking at adding an omega-3 fatty acid to our joint health product line, we came upon an exciting alternative omega-3 that is proven to be extremely beneficial to joints. This was the omega-3 called ETA (eicosatetranoic acid). The number one source of ETA on the planet is the oil extracted from the green-lipped mussel of New Zealand.

TopDog created an omega oil supplement called Flexerna™ Omega that delivers a patented, 100% pure green-lipped mussel oil called Supernol® into your dog's diet...pure ETA with the addition of high potency fish oil.

Whether you choose to add an omega-3 supplement to your dog's diet or not, just make sure to do your research and discuss it with your veterinarian.

Chapter 10: Medications – The Pharmaceuticals

With over a decade of experience in treating animals and thousands of personal cases under my belt, let alone all the consulting, one thing that is clear to me is that pet owners don't have a clear understanding of pharmaceutical pain medications, which ones to use and when to use them.

If our goal is to make sure that our dogs are comfortable and not in pain, then it is important that you have a basic understanding of the main drugs that are available in the current marketplace.

As with all pharmaceuticals a prescription from your veterinarian is required.

My goal here is to keep things simple and introduce you to some of the most commonly used medications, not to overburden you with every single medication available. The three main families of medications that you should have a basic understanding about are the following: non-steroidal anti-inflammatories, opioids, and neurologic pain medications

Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatories (NSAIDs)

This is the most commonly used, first-line-of-defense pain medication in the veterinary marketplace. It's obvious from their name that these drugs address inflammation. In medicine we always talk about the four Pillars of Inflammation: swelling, redness, heat, and pain. If your dog recently had surgery, then all of these pillars would be very much occurring, and therefore an NSAID would be important to help control their pain. On the opposite spectrum would be an older dog who

has been struggling because of bad hips and secondary arthritis. This disease also causes swelling, redness, heat, and pain. Therefore, the dog should be on some degree of pain management, and NSAIDs would be a great choice.

When we talk about anti-inflammatories, the most common and widely used NSAID is aspirin. You can walk into any pet store, and there you will find it, labeled “dog aspirin.” I often find this comical because dog aspirin and human aspirin is exactly the same; it is aspirin. The only difference is that someone called it dog aspirin. That said, the important thing to know about the aspirin you give your dog is that it needs to be gastric-safe aspirin. Common consumer brands would be Bufferin®, or some gastric-coated aspirin.

Important note: When it comes to using aspirin with your dog, you need to be very careful. Technically, you would not want to use aspirin for longer than 3 days with your dog. The reason for this is simply because aspirin, in addition to blocking all the bad inflammation in the body also blocks lots of good things vital to health, such as our body’s normal GI protectants. At the end of the day, prior to using aspirin with your dog, make sure to contact your veterinarian, and always make sure you give the medication with food.

A much better option would be a targeted NSAID. For a long time now, veterinary medicine has had access to much stronger, more specifically targeted anti-inflammatories. These NSAIDs target the COX-2 receptors responsible for bad inflammation without interfering with all of the good things that broad blockers like aspirin can interfere with.

The most common NSAIDs used by veterinarians are:

- Rimadyl®: The active ingredient called carprofen went off patent in 2011, and now there are a number of generics available. Some of the more commonly used are.
- Novox™ (generic carprofen)
- Vetprofen™ (generic carprofen)
- Metacam®
- Previcox®
- Deramaxx®

Find the Right NSAID for Your Dog

What many people don't know or realize is that not all anti-inflammatories work the same on each dog. Some work better on one dog than another. Therefore, if your veterinarian put your dog on one NSAID and you don't think it is making a difference, it may be that your dog just does not respond to that medication and you need to try another one. This is very similar to people and anti-histamines. I personally could take Allegra® or Claritin® all day long and it would not help one bit with my seasonal allergies, yet I can take one Zyrtec® and I am perfect and ready to go.

If you need to switch your dog's NSAID, make sure that you discuss with your veterinarian what is referred to as the "wash-out" period. When switching from one NSAID to another, it is common to not give any medication for a three- to five-day

period of time in order to prevent any potential complications, mostly GI disturbances.

Opioids and Synthetic Opioids

When it comes to comprehensive pain management, often times a NSAID alone is not enough. Opioids, as a class of drugs, have long been used to control pain. The most commonly used opioid-like pain medication in dogs for moderate to severe pain is Tramadol. It is available in a 50mg tablet form. Its safety profile is really good, and the dosage range is wide, which helps tremendously when effectively controlling your dog's pain.

Codeine is another opioid-like medication commonly used for mild to moderate pain control in dogs.

The Takeaway

As a dog with joint health problems continues to get older, these medications should be viewed as tools in the toolbox that you can add into a daily regimen to keep your dog comfortable and moving on a daily basis. In addition, it is always a good idea to discuss with your veterinarian the other alternative therapies that are available to assist with joint health problems, such as stem cell therapy, platelet-rich plasma treatments, acupuncture, physical therapy, or even joint replacement in some cases.

Conclusion: Moving Forward

I hope that by the end of this book you now have a better understanding of your dog and a more perceptive awareness of how to truly listen to your dog. With this basic understanding, you will now be able to pick up on any early changes and then intelligently discuss these changes with your veterinarian, thereby playing an active role rather than a passive role in your loved one's health.

By learning the concepts of the "Pain Trial" and "Tweaking" you should feel empowered that you have these tools, which will help you not only discover, but better manage your dog's long term joint health alongside your veterinarian.

You also have the knowledge to make yourself a more aware consumer when it comes to the world of joint supplements, so that you can make an informed decision and provide your dog with a safe, effective natural supplement that works. And, last but not least, you have also now gained a basic understanding of pharmaceutical pain management, the drugs that are available and the role in which they play in keeping your dog comfortable during their lifetime.

One thing is for sure, we all love our dogs so much and never want them to suffer or be in pain. Hopefully moving forward this book will continue to be a valuable resource for you to help your dog live an awesome life.

DOG'S DON'T CRY™ is a simple how-to-guide to identify if your dog has joint pain early-on, before they ever have to suffer.

Five-Star Rated Amazon author Dr. James St. Clair takes you through an easy to follow step-by-step process on how to identify the early signs of pain, even before your dog's veterinarian recognizes there is a problem. He shares with you a sad case of misdiagnosis and how you can ensure your dog is not a victim of misinformation. Dr. St. Clair then goes on to educate you on the 12 most common early signs of joint pain in dogs and delivers a rational approach on how you can immediately start helping your dog live a comfortable life.

YOU WILL LEARN:

- The reason 90% of pet owners totally miss not only the early signs of pain, but even worse, the later signs of pain in their dogs
- The 12 most common silent signs of joint pain that dogs display, often signs that even trained professionals miss
- Why it is often impossible for your dog's doctor to pick up on these signs of pain
- Why you, the pet owner, are the key to early detection and minimizing silent suffering for your dog

BUILDING ON YOUR NEW FOUND ENLIGHTENMENT, YOU WILL ALSO LEARN:

- The difference between Management vs. Prevention and exactly where your dog fits in.
- Why the concept of a “Pain Trial” can be a lifesaving tool.
- What it means to “Tweak” your dog along as things change over time.
- The many tools you need to have in your toolbox in order to provide your dog with an optimal life

This book is the Holy Grail on how you should be playing an active role in your dog’s joint health and most importantly their comfort.

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