

SOUTH EAST COUNTRY VETS

31 Cairnscrest Street, Toogoolawah QLD 4313 | P: 07 5423 1303
80 Hart Street, Blackbutt QLD 4306 | P: 07 4170 0022
16 William Street, Crows Nest QLD 4355 | P: 07 4698 2520



PATELLA LUXATION

The patella, or knee cap, is a moveable bone located over the knee that connects the quadriceps muscles of the thigh to the lower leg. The patella normally sits in a groove, called the trochlear groove, at the lower end of the femur (thigh bone) and it makes up part of the stifle joint.

The patella has the important function of holding the quadriceps muscle in place. By doing this, the leg can extend and flex in a controlled and stable manner.

WHAT IS PATELLA LUXATION?

Patellar luxation is a dislocation of the kneecap often seen in small dogs. Most often, animals are born with the condition and it gets worse with age. Usually both stifles are affected and the condition may be aggravated by trauma or a mild exercise related injury.

Luxation of the patella occurs when the trochlear groove is too shallow to hold the patella in place. If there is a flattening of this groove, the knee cap can 'pop' in and out of its normal position. The patella will most often move medially (towards the midline of the dog) however they can move laterally. This leads to varied amounts of pain, discomfort and early onset arthritis.

Patella luxation is classified in grades.

Grade 0 – normal stifle with no patella instability

Grade 1 – patella is mostly in place and only luxates with pressure

Grade 2 – patella moves in and out spontaneously with movement

Grade 3 – patella is out of place most of the time

Grade 4 – patella is always out of place and cannot be moved back into a normal position.

CLINICAL SIGNS

Signs vary between dogs depending on their age, the grade of patella luxation and also the degree of associated arthritis. Signs may develop slowly or rapidly and can be affected by trauma or strenuous activity. Signs include:

- sudden onset lameness, intermittent lameness or chronic lameness
- the leg may be carried with the stifle flexed before touching the ground again; they may shake or extend the leg prior to regaining its full use
- hind limbs may be bowed in severe cases

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Surgery is usually recommended if your pet is in a great deal of discomfort for the majority of the time. If your pet is not showing any signs of discomfort, they should be monitored closely for any changes. There are several treatment options available for your pet and your veterinary surgeon will determine which treatment method is best for your pet. Options include deepening the trochlear groove to keep the patella in its correct position, reconstructing the soft tissues of the area or changing the alignments of particular bones in the stifle.

It should be remembered that dogs with patella luxations are more prone to rupturing their cruciate ligaments (ligaments that stabilise the knee) due to the abnormal strain placed on the joint with this condition.



Ongoing arthritis treatment with Cartrophen injections, glucosamine supplements, joint support medications and prescription diets is also recommended to assist your pet in being as comfortable and pain free as possible.

PROGNOSIS

Most dogs that undergo surgical correction have a good return to normal function however this does depend on the stage of luxation your pet has been diagnosed with. Arthritis will progress regardless of treatment option chosen and this needs to be treated appropriately. There is always a risk that the affected leg/s may suffer cruciate damage at a later time and the opposing leg may also require surgery for a luxating patella in the future.

There is a genetic predisposition to develop this condition (i.e. it is heritable) so all pets that have patella luxations that are not due to trauma, should not be bred from.

This information sheet is not intended as a substitute for a veterinary consultation.

It is recommended that a consultation be arranged with a veterinary practitioner if you have any concerns with your pet's health.