

# ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF LANESVILLE

1849 Highway 11 Lanesville, IN 47136 (812) 952-3643

## **Back Pain in Dogs**

By Dr. Rene Wingerter

Anyone who has ever had a slipped or herniated disc would have a lot of sympathy for a dachshund with the same problem. Anytime you move, even breathe, there is a shooting pain. Cats have such flexible backs that they rarely suffer from this affliction, but many of our dogs do get this painful and often debilitating disease.

Certain breeds with long backs such as dachshunds and Pekinese have back problems for obvious reasons. But some other breeds like beagles and poodles frequently suffer from disc disease due to genetic traits that are less obvious.

There are pads, called discs, between all of the individual back bones or vertebrae. These discs can become less flexible so when the pet jumps or twists his back, part of the pad can be forced out of place. When this happens it can put pressure on nerves causing them to swell and become irritated. An irritated nerve is very painful and can also cause your pet's legs to become numb.

Dogs show back pain by panting, not eating or drinking, tucking their tail, and looking at you with large fearful eyes. They will also refuse to jump up on things and sometimes will cry out when you go to pick them up. If the problem becomes bad enough that their legs go numb, they will drag their feet or be unable to move them at all.

There are several drugs we can give for the pain and inflammation, but the most important thing is to restrict your dog's movements. This can be hard to do in an active young dog. Often you have to put them in a small carrier or cage or a cardboard box. You should take them outside to go to the bathroom only. You should carry them out and then right back in. If you have to walk them be sure they are on a leash and carry them down any stairs. Do not let them jump up on furniture even after they are feeling better as this can cause a relapse. If you need to, make steps or a ramp next to the bed or couch. After two weeks you can allow a little more movement, but you should always be careful about letting a small dog make big jumps because they can herniate another disc.

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In some cases the problems is so severe that surgery is needed and even then there are some dogs that become permanently paralyzed. But with early treatment, this is rare and most pets recover well.

If you have any questions please feel free to call the Animal Hospital of Lanesville at 952-3643. 🐾