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## Old dog front legs bowed

We are used to seeing bow-legged dogs in cartoons or in company logos meant to give a rugged, imposing image to their business, but in real life, bowed legs can be a serious problem in puppies and adult dogs. Bowed legs in dogs are an abnormality that is noticed when a leg grows curved or bowed instead of appearing straight as it normally should. This type of abnormality is most likely to be seen in young, growing due to problems in their development, but can also be seen as an aftermath to traumatic injuries sometimes even in older dogs. Whatever the cause, it's important to consult with a vet to determine the best course of action.The aftermath of an Injury When puppies are developing, the long bones of their front and back legs are gradually growing, courtesy of growth plates, also known as epiphyseal plates. These growth plates consist of soft, cartilage matter located at the end of the puppy's bones. Growth plates tend to close when the puppy is 12 to 18 months of age. Around this time, the soft cartilage at the end of the bones hardens and mineralizes into hard bone. If an injury occurs before the growth plates close, there are chances that the cells on the damaged side of the growth plate quit growing, while the cells on the non-damaged side continue to grow, leading to uneven growth and its associated curving, which ultimately leads to bowed legs. Traumatic injuries that may cause bowed legs in a puppy include being hit by a car or the puppy being accidentally dropped.[otw is sidebar=otw-sidabar-1]"An impact such as taking a fall or landing on the front limb with full force can drive this cone-shaped growth plate together and result in severe damage to the cells. This type of injury is common in short-legged dog."
– Veterinary surgeon, Dr.Daniel A. Degner,Breeds with Bowed Legs In certain breeds, the appearance of bowed legs may be genetic, which means it's passed down from one generation to another.The American Kennel Club's Bulldog's breed standard calls for short, very stout forelegs that are straight and muscular, set wide apart and have "bowed outline;" however, the bones of the legs should not be curved or bandy. This particular conformation is what gives the bulldog its peculiar, shuffling, "rolling" gait. In other dog breeds, the bowed legs are due to a mutation in the gene responsible for converting cartilage to bone leading to what is known as "acrodroplasia." In these breeds, the bones of the legs appear shortened and deformed with bowed forelimbs. Common achondroplastic breeds include the basset hound, dachshund and corgi. In these breeds such bowing is acceptable, up to the point of being desirable in their breed standard. In other breeds, bowing of the legs is considered a serious fault. Just like bad hips and eye and heart conditions can be passed down from one generation to another, bowed legs may be hereditary and considered an unappealing trait that breeders try to avoid from happening through careful breeding protocols. However, in some cases, temporary bowing may appear in certain breeds of dogs when they're puppies. Veterinarian Dr. Deb, mentions that Rotweillers are a breed that tend to look "hocky" as they develop meaning they appear to be bow-legged in the hind legs but the good news is that most pups outgrow this as they mature.Nutritional Problems At times, bowing of the legs may be attributed to a nutritional imbalance. This is not common as it used to be, as most dog foods are now produced to be nutritionally complete, but occasionally, breeders may be feeding a homemade diet that isn't nutritionally complete as it should and this may have an impact. Raw and homemade diets for puppies can be risky if there's a disruption in the calcium/phosphorus balance. "Homemade raw diets have been associated with nutritional imbalances, leading to skeletal problems in growing puppies," warns board-certified canine nutritionist Dianne Laflamme, Ricketts. It is a nutritional imbalance of phosphorus available in the diet which has been known to cause outward bowing of the shafts of the long bones in dogs, poultry and certain farm animals."Rickets: Signs may include bone pain and swelling, a stiff gait or limp, difficulty in rising, bowed limbs, and fractures." Merck Veterinary ManualSeeing the Vet The above are just a few of the common reasons why puppies may have bowed legs. While bowed legs may seem like a cosmetic issue, in reality these limb deformities risk causing the dog to move in an abnormal manner which can lead to pain and arthritis. Anytime a puppy goes through a traumatic injury, it's important to see the vet. The bowing does not occur right away, but generally about 2 to 4 weeks later. It's important to carefully monitor the leg and compare it to the non-injured one so to recognize early signs of trouble. An orthopedic exam done by a vet, or even better, an orthopedic surgeon can determine what may be causing the bowing along with the best treatment.Did you know? There's a good reason why veterinarians and dog trainers discourage vigorous jumping and other forms of strenuous exercise in puppies: those growth plates are very vulnerable! It's a good idea to wait until those growth plates close and seal before engaging the pup in vigorous activities and canine sports.References:Black's Veterinary Dictionary, by Edward Boden, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.; 19th edition (1998)Merck Veterinary Manual, Disorders Associated with Calcium, Phosphorus, and Vitamin D in Dogs, retrieved from the Web on April 17th, 2016Vet Surgery Central, Angular Limb Deformity, retrieved from the Web on April 17th, 2016[otw is sidebar=otw-sidabar-1]"I March, 2017 When it comes to senior dogs even the simplest of surgical procedures can strike fear in the hearts of dog parents because of the risks associated with anesthesia. Whether it is for diagnostics, a routine procedure or something more complicated, one thing is certain, the possible impact of anesthesia should not be taken lightly, especially when your dog is a senior. However, a wise veterinarian once said that "age is not a disease", so senior dogs should not be disqualified from treatment options solely because of their age. So how do we as dog parents help to reduce the risk of anesthesia in our senior dogs? Testing Before putting your senior dog through a procedure that requires anesthesia it is very important that you have some testing done to ensure they can handle such heavy sedation. Don't be afraid to ask for tests if your veterinarian is not suggesting them. In addition to a physical exam, pre-op bloodwork is a key diagnostic tool that all parents need to insist on having done. According to Dr. Jeffrey Levy, DVM, CVA and owner of House Call Vet NYC, "Pre-op blood tests are used to determine the absence of underlying conditions that would make surgery risky or leave the patient vulnerable to the effects of anesthesia. Most important are kidney and liver values, hematocrit (red blood cell count), blood sugar for potential diabetes and a heartworm test." Each bit of information retrieved from the bloodwork tells a story that can help your veterinarian evaluate the overall health and identify any risk factors they need to address. "Elevated liver enzymes might indicate the pet has Cushing's Disease, liver disease, or a tumor. High or low blood sugar can indicate diabetes or possibly a pancreatic tumor. Decreased kidney function would alter the type of anesthesia used or make anesthesia too risky to move forward. Low red blood cells or platelets could indicate infection, inflammation, or possibly cancer," explains Dr. Judy Morgan, DVM, CVA, CVCP, CVFT, owner of two award winning practices and the Chief Medical Officer for Monkey's House Senior Dog Hospice and Sanctuary. Additional tests such as an ECG, urinalysis and chest X-rays may also be wise and for invasive procedures with a high risk of bleeding, Dr. Jennifer Queiroz-Williams, DVM, MS, Associate Professor of Veterinary Anesthesia and Analgesia, LSU School of Veterinary Medicine recommends doing a clotting profile as well. "Chronic anemia, indication of kidney disease, genitourinary infection or systemic infection, abnormal chest radiographs or ECG and abnormal clotting profile, independent of age, would be red flags to not move forward with anesthesia," states Dr. Queiroz-Williams. When my senior pug Lily was going through her testing to ensure she could handle anesthesia to undergo an MRI, CT scan and the inevitable surgery, she underwent many of the above mentioned tests as well as an abdominal ultrasound. Having so much information available prior to undergoing the anesthesia gave her dog owner and supporting team the necessary details to devise a clear plan and made moving forward possible. It was also incredibly comforting to me to know that all her results came in so positive. Being Proactive Ensuring that your dog is at an ideal weight can make a huge difference in how they respond to anesthesia. Overweight dogs have a much more difficult time breathing and this means their hearts have to work that much harder, especially when under anesthesia. Incorporating a healthy, active lifestyle will keep your dog as fit as possible, reducing risks should they one day need to undergo a procedure requiring heavy sedation. It is also very important that you discuss any medication or supplements your dog may be taking with your veterinarian prior to any procedure since even a natural remedy can put your dog at risk during surgery. Dr. Morgan explains, "Some supplements can cause prolonged clotting times and increase bleeding, so be sure to discuss any supplements you are giving with your veterinarian prior to the procedure. Also let them know if you are giving any over-the-counter medications, as many can interfere with anesthetic procedures or surgery. It's amazing how many pet owners give aspirin without a thought; this can cause pets to bleed excessively during surgery. Sedative or anti-anxiety medications may interfere with anesthetic drugs that are used." Your dog will need to fast prior to the procedure and experts also recommend grooming and bathing your dog prior to any surgery. This will help to keep them clean before and after surgery. During the Procedure While many procedures are done in your veterinarian's clinic, you can request that an anesthesiologist be present. The more invasive a procedure, the more you need to consider this decision. According to Dr. Queiroz-Williams, "Best practice is to have an anesthesiologist always present or at least available for consultation. However, specific health conditions (systemic diseases, pre-shock, unstable patients, all very invasive abdominal procedures, cancer surgeries, central neurologic patients, and many others) should have an anesthesiologist present. Some breeds can present challenges for anesthesia (e.g., brachycephalic breeds, breeds affected by the MDR1 mutation like Collies and Long-haired Whippets, and many other particularities of specific breeds)." I have had a few things in several different years for my dogs. My first pug Mackenzie needed dental surgery when he was 15 years of age. Terrified, I made sure not to let him be tested again. I requested that he have his dental work done by a specialist with an anesthesiologist present. With Mike thanks to his glowing bloodwork and other positive tests I felt that his dental work could be done at my vet's clinic. With Lily, since she was being treated by a specialist, all of her procedures requiring anesthesia had an anesthesiologist involved, especially given the length of time she was under. Now with my Winnie, my 6 year old French Bulldog who has noticeable breathing issues, I am going to ensure she has an anesthesiologist on site for any procedures she may need. During any procedure requiring anesthesia your dog's vital signs are constantly monitored. I find it comforting to ask exactly what they will be keeping an eye on which typically includes heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature, CO2 and oxygen levels and if necessary, anesthesia may be adjusted throughout. Recovery If you have had a dog undergo a diagnostic or surgical procedure requiring anesthesia then you know how scary it can be waiting for that phone call letting you know how everything went. I remember that feeling of unbelievable relief that consumed me when I received the phone call from Lily's neurologist after her 6 hour back surgery telling me that she woke up like a champ. Helping our dogs recover begins before the procedure is even completed. From a technical perspective Dr. Queiroz-Williams describes the impact that the proper administration of anesthetics and pain killers during the procedure can have on recovery.

"Performing multimodal anesthesia and analgesia, while performing high quality anesthesia will overall improve the quality of recovery. Intense monitoring especially for the first three hours post anesthesia are vital to a safe anesthetic event." Post-op there are also many things that we can do to help ensure a fast, healthy recovery. Dr. Levy reminds us to be quite well on "legs, but long term the impact of this missing limb can take its toll on humans do when we have an injury, dogs will compensate with their healthy limbs, but as they get older those healthy limbs can suffer as a result of taking on the weight no longer supported by the missing limb. In Lily's case I also needed to restrict her movement for a few days post-op. Have a bland diet prepared ahead of time. (I like 3/4 boiled lean ground turkey mixed with 1/4 canned organic pumpkin puree.) Extra fluid intake will help the body flush the anesthetic agents out of the body. 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