

Evaluation of Young Dogs for Hip Problems

Due to the popularity of our fixed-price "TPLO Package" over the past few months, we have decided to introduce a fixed-price "Hip Evaluation Package" to offer an excellent value to your clients and assist you in providing the best referral care for your patients. The package price for 2007 is \$425, which includes initial consultation, sedation, PennHIP radiographs with both in-house and official UPenn interpretation, and follow-up phone consultation with recommendations once the report is available. As always, you will receive a faxed record of the patient visit following discharge.

Canine hip dysplasia is one of the most common orthopedic problems seen in large breed dogs. There are several subjective and objective radiographic techniques that can be used to help evaluate dogs for hip dysplasia. The most widely-used technique is the leg-extended VD ("OFA like") view, with evaluation for joint congruence, subluxation, and degenerative changes. Dogs must be 2 years of age before the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) will accept films for official evaluation and certification using their subjective, 7-point scale. Many false-negative results occur, with dogs that have apparently normal hips on a leg-extended VD view going on to develop significant disease. This is probably because extending the hips naturally tightens the joint capsule so that only severe laxity can be detected. In the recent life-long Nestle Purina study of labrador retrievers, 55% of the dogs that were scored as "normal" at 2 years of age using the OFA criteria went on to develop coxofemoral arthritis later in life.

An alternative technique that was developed at the University of Pennsylvania and is gaining popularity worldwide is the PennHIP method. This radiographic method includes a leg-extended VD view for evaluation of degenerative changes. Additionally, compression and distraction views are incorporated to assess for passive laxity within the joint capsule. An objective, numerical "distraction index" (DI) is assigned to each dog at the PennHIP center after submission of the films. The false negative rate is much lower compared to the OFA method alone when used to predict degenerative joint disease later in life. PennHIP films must be taken by a veterinarian certified in the technique, and all images are submitted for official analysis. Reference ranges for DI are calculated individually for each breed and relate to the probability of developing degenerative joint disease. Mixed breed dogs can also be evaluated and their reference range is based on the entire population. DI values range from 0 to 1, with smaller numbers indicating a tighter, or more perfect hip. PennHIP radiographs can be obtained in dogs as early as 16 weeks of age.

Dogs with breeding potential, dogs of high-risk breeds, and any dog with clinical signs of hip pain are excellent candidates for hip screening. Various surgical and non-surgical interventions are possible for dogs diagnosed with canine hip dysplasia. Recommendations depend in part on age, severity of clinical signs, results of hip palpation, and radiographic findings. In general, Juvenile Pubic Symphysiodesis (JPS) must be performed before 20 weeks of age for satisfactory results and requires distraction-view radiographs to identify appropriate candidates. Triple Pelvic Osteotomy (TPO) does not have a strict age limitation but the best candidates have good congruence on the compression view, no evidence of degenerative change, and a positive Ortolani sign; many dogs are no longer good candidates after approximately 1 year of age. Femoral Head and Neck Osteotomy (FHO) can be performed at any age. Total Hip Replacement (THR) is generally performed only in dogs that are skeletally mature.

Please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions regarding this information or the enclosed client handouts. Dr. Nielsen is generally in the hospital Monday through Thursday and is always happy to discuss surgical cases.

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