

Dogs with Vertigo / Vestibulitis

Compilation of Blog Posts on www.CanineFitness.com

July 22, 2015

Have you ever suffered from vertigo?

Did you know dogs can also suffer from vertigo and that it is often the result of a sudden-onset condition called “Canine Vestibular Dysfunction”?

Dogs can have a variety of symptoms appear when they are suffering from vestibular dysfunction including: nystagmus (involuntary movement of the eye), vomiting, circling behaviour, head tilt, and falling to name a few. These symptoms often appear suddenly and without warning with this condition being most common in older dogs

From a veterinary perspective, a vet can prescribe medications to decrease the anxiety often associated with this condition, and to aid with improving the dog's appetite and settling the nausea. The literature indicates that symptoms often persist for 1-2 wks before improvement but that a head tilt may persist.

The inside of the canine ear is very similar to that of the inside of the human ear. It is located in the temporal bone and is composed of three parts: the vestibule, the cochlea and 3 semicircular canals. The 3 semicircular canals cover a range of 360 degrees of movement. Also, the inner ear is filled with fluid and contains small crystals. It is the inner ear that registers tilt and acceleration. All of these structures combined allow the dog to sense and understand the full range of motion, speed and position. When Canine Vestibular Dysfunction arises, it's often a result of the crystals moving into the wrong location.

When you bring your dog to a physio for an assessment they will take a history, and assess all of the presenting symptoms. From there, the physio will then move the dog in and out of certain positions in order to determine which ears are affected and in what way. Once the physio has a clearer idea of what specific aspect of the ear is causing the problem, they will then move the dog through another series of positions and movements in order to attempt to rectify the issue.

Once the initial issue is resolved, the physio will often then assess the neck for any pain or discomfort as alterations in joint position may have occurred as a result of the head tilt, stiffness and circling that began at the onset of Canine Vestibular Dysfunction episode.

Owners are often quite distressed to see their dogs in this state. But this is phenomenon that is readily fixable... and sometimes with just one treatment. We're here to help if this happens to your dog!

Sept 5, 2015

What every dog owner should know about Idiopathic Geriatric Vestibulitis

This blog should really read: Public Service Announcement to all Dog Owners! Every dog owner should read this dog – especially if they have an old dog or a dog that they plan on seeing it through to its old age (tongue in cheek... that should be all of you!!)

I recently had some clients bring their dogs in to me for their regular monthly check up and tune up. Two fabulous geriatric German Shorthaired Pointers, mom & daughter, who are kept active with regular therapy and who both enjoy going out 'birding' now and then. The owners had mentioned that the elder of the two had caused quite a scare a couple of weeks back. She had developed a vestibular episode one evening. Dizziness, balance issues, listing to one side, rapid side to side eye movement, head tilt, and wanting to lie down.

Now according to the wife, the old gal was quite affected until 3am because the husband didn't do the right thing right away. (I want to do a study... it's either husbands, boyfriends, brothers, fathers, or sons that do the wrong thing, or that wives, girlfriends, sisters, daughters, or mothers delight in tell on them! Forgive me! I digress.) Anyways, I remarked that being 'mostly back to normal' by 3am or even by the next day was really quite extraordinary and what did she mean by 'doing the right thing?'

They began to tell me the story of their previous pointer that had several episodes of vestibulitis and how they had learned over the years, to let her go to the ground to whichever side she wanted to go and then flip her over to her other side (i.e. roll her onto her back and over to the other side). They said it worked like a charm every time!

Well, I was blown away! I started going on about how they had unknowingly done a Dix-Halpike or Eply Manoeuvre and that they had likely repositioned an otolith from a semi-circular canal into the main ear canal... and blah, blah, blah, about cilia in the canals, and messaging to the brain, and how things get distorted, and more blah, blah, blah! And a little extra blah, blah, blah about how vet medicine doesn't yet recognize this phenomenon, but in people it's called Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo... blah, blah. But bottom line... they were fricking geniuses for figuring this out in the way they did! Right then and there I told them, I've got to tell everybody about this. Every dog owner should know this! It's quite simply brilliant!

So, here are a couple of YouTube videos for those who don't know what this phenomenon looks like:

<https://youtu.be/zcX0-UWig1s>

<https://youtu.be/W48Ufk4OUdo>

https://youtu.be/5Lwfr46o7_Q

And here is an article for more information about the 'blah, blah, blah'!!!

http://www.caninefitness.com/docs/Vestibular_Dysfunction.pdf

Share this with dog owners. Share this with your vets. And thank you to Dale & Sandra for sharing your story!

Cheers! Laurie

--- --- ---

Dec 14, 2015

"Is my dog having a stroke?"

Jo-Ann Scott-Noye, BScPT

You are sitting outside in the sun on a beautiful sunny day with your older dog. A neighbour comes over and your dog tries to get up to greet him – but he can't. Suddenly and without warning, your dog can't stand up. You look at him and his eyes are 'rolling around in his head'. Fear sets in as you think he is having a stroke and you suddenly think you are facing the end of his life straight in the eyes. But are you? Several years ago, my sister faced this exact situation. Sisqo was at the cottage in the Maritimes with my father when my sister was out visiting here in Alberta. I awoke one morning to her standing at the door to my bedroom crying, thinking Sisqo was having a stroke and dying, and worse, yet was that she was not with him. After a stress filled day of getting her on a flight back home, she flew there thinking she was going home to make the decision to end his misery. After seeing him at the vet, unable to stand, head tilting to the side, and his eyes glassy and rolling, she went home thinking that the next day she would have to let him go. Luckily, before any irreversible action was taken, he showed signs of huge improvement. She was sent home with some information on old dog vestibular disease.

Old-dog vestibular disease, idopathic (unknown cause) old dog syndrome, also known as geriatric vestibular disease, although scary to see, has a good chance of recovery. Basically, the body's balance system gets out of wack. Think of it this way – have you ever gone on a playground carousel as a kid and spun yourself crazy? When you get off you feel dizzy and have a hard time standing up. What has happened is that your brain thinks your body is still spinning so it is trying to correct itself. This is basically what is happening to your poor old dog; their brain doesn't know where their body is. Of course, as you can imagine, feeling dizzy would make it hard to stand upright or walk, the head tilts, the eyes roll or flick back and

forth, and nausea and vomiting sets in, which also causes the appetite to be diminished.

So what can you do? First and foremost I beg of you to recognize the symptoms and explore your options. Before you make a decision that cannot be reversed, consider consulting with a physiotherapist trained in canine rehabilitation. They can perform a thorough assessment on your dog to identify any musculoskeletal issues that can be addressed. Additionally, within the physiotherapy repertoire of treatments, there is a technique that has a high success rate in rebalancing the brain and body. (For further detail you can refer to these two posts which discuss this syndrome in much greater detail <http://www.caninefitness.com/index.php?pid=35> and http://www.caninefitness.com/docs/Vestibular_Dysfunction.pdf). We have successfully treated this condition here at the Canine Fitness Centre many times; and these dogs have gone on to continue their happy and healthy lives.

So, will every dog with these symptoms respond to a physiotherapy-based approach? Not always. Although geriatric vestibulitis is a common condition, these symptoms could be caused by a more serious problem, requiring expensive testing such as an MRI. Given that many dogs respond favourably even in their first treatment, it is perhaps a better option to try the rehab-physio route before pursuing expensive options, especially in a sudden onset case. Don't you owe it to yourself and your most faithful companion to give it a try? Please feel free to call us if you have any further questions about how physio can help your older dog.