

Patellar Luxation

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What is patellar luxation?

Patellar luxation or kneecap dislocation can occur due to an inherited abnormality of the knee joint or be caused by trauma. The kneecap may pop back in on its own or may need to be pushed back into place by your vet. It is likely to cause lameness when it is out of place. There are two types of knee dislocation.

1. Lateral Patellar Luxation (LPL)

The kneecap is displaced towards the outside of the knee joint. This type of patellar luxation is seen more commonly in the larger breeds.

2. Medial Patellar Luxation (MPL)

The kneecap is displaced towards the inside of the knee joint, and is more commonly seen in the smaller or Toy breeds.



What are the signs or symptoms?

Patellar luxation will usually become apparent by the time your dog is six months old, although in severe cases may be evident in pups as young as 8 weeks of age. If the condition is mild however, it can go unnoticed until the dog is much older. In mild cases it may cause your dog to hop or skip for a few steps and may come and go without much pain. In moderate cases the dog may yelp out in pain as it is running. In severe cases the knee may dislocate completely and need to be put back into place by a vet. When the kneecap is displaced, it may cause pain and cartilage damage and your dog may develop osteoarthritis which in itself can be quite painful. If left untreated the dog may become progressively lamer and the joint can become swollen with poor mobility. Even in mild cases it is a good idea to get your vet's advice regarding long term management.

How is it diagnosed?

A vet will be able to diagnose this condition through a physical examination and may need to take x-rays to determine if other problems such as osteoarthritis are present in the joint.

How is it treated?

Treatment depends on how often the knee pops out and how easily it goes back into normal position and whether or not there is osteoarthritis. In mild cases where it occurs rarely, no surgery or medication is required. Surgery may be necessary in moderate to severe cases, which will not only keep the knee cap in place but may also prevent osteoarthritis. Surgery is usually successful but it may not stop degeneration of the joint due to osteoarthritis, and dislocation can sometimes recur.

How can you avoid buying a dog with patellar luxation?

Apart from when caused by trauma, this condition is thought to be inherited, and may be polygenic (controlled by a number of genes). When inherited, the deformities that cause this condition are present at birth (congenital). In severe cases, puppies will often show signs from the time they begin to walk, and deformities of the bone and muscle groups will develop as the puppy grows. In susceptible breeds, the parents of a puppy you are considering purchasing should have a simple examination by a veterinary surgeon for evidence of luxating patellas. It is recommended that dogs suffering from Patellar Luxation, along with their parents and siblings should not be used for breeding.