

Laser Powered Healing

Dear Dr. Mulder: My dog has had lower back pain for a long time and I was wondering if there is any way to help him with his chronic pain?

Chronic pain control is vital for our pets as they get older. Due to good nutrition and disease prevention, many of our pets are living much longer. A mixed blessing as they now are facing some of the same age related conditions that we humans encounter. Lower back pain and osteoarthritis are two common problems I encounter. There are several aspects to addressing pain in these patients.

Whenever there is tissue damage, the pain sensing nerve fibers send messages to the brain, letting us know that there is a problem. In case we do not clue in, there is a multiplying effect as the nerve makes its way to the brain. It may start out with one angry nerve but by the time the message gets through, it has recruited the help of many of its neighbors to ensure the message gets through. Particularly with chronic pain, some of these nerve pathways are very good at getting the message through. Our therapy for this stage is anti-inflammatory medications that reduce the source of the pain signal. Many of these medications have some effect on blocking the pain signal very effectively. Often rest is helpful if there is a fresh injury or a sudden worsening of the problem like a slip on the ice or falling on stairs.

Promotion of the body's own healing is essential for long term pain free functioning. Any time a cell is damaged, it must be repaired or it will die. The ability of our bodies to repair themselves is a testimony to their amazing design. If only our cars and computers were self healing! This healing can be helped by non weight bearing exercises and stretches, nutritional supplements and now lasers. Yes, cutting edge of science can now promote healing. Low intensity lasers of the right wavelength can actually restore individual cells. In a manner similar to how plants produce energy from sunlight, animal cells can absorb energy from this kind of laser to assist it repair and return to function. In addition to stimulating healing by this method, a pulsating laser is able to reduce the signals from local pain fibers. This is a great advancement for patients who have long term pain issues. A time of frequent application of the laser (1-2 weeks) is able to stimulate the healing and reduce the pain signals while a monthly application can be used for maintenance. Used on its own or in conjunction with anti-inflammatory medications, laser therapy holds great promise. Lasers have been used to treat a wide variety of chronic pain issues including arthritis, lower back pain, lick granulomas, bladder pain, skin rashes and even dental pain! Call us to see if your pet would benefit from this exciting therapy.

Removing causative factors is very difficult for many of our chronic diseases but for any skeletal problems, weight loss is of critical importance. Veterinary supervision and appropriate diet selection is very important for senior pets. Their ability to cope with even slight dietary imbalances is much more compromised due to aging.

No matter what has been done to manage the problem, things unfortunately always progress. Our bodies are in a state of constant decay! Sooner or later, things will deteriorate to the point of pain from time to time. Powerful pain relievers are often needed for a few days until the crisis passes. Please ensure that your beloved aging pet has a plan in place for all aspects of their health. Book your veterinary assessment if there are any visible signs of pain or discomfort! Remember that pets are very slow to complain so by the time you notice anything, the problem is usually quite advanced!