

# Sports Medicine

## INJURIES IN DOGS

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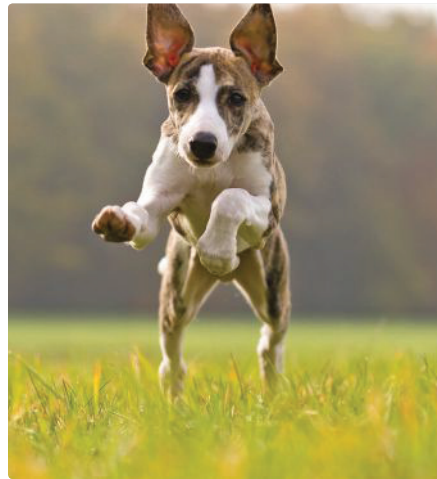
Sports injuries in man and dogs have spawned a new field called Sports Medicine. Sports medicine surgeons focus on the prevention and treatment of injuries that occur in competitive athletes as well as the pet dog that likes to run and play. Surgeons at GCVS are leaders in the field of Sports Medicine, managing sports injuries using a combination of physical conditioning, rehabilitative exercise and minimally-invasive surgery.

Sports injuries are commonly seen in hunting and field trial Labradors and racing Greyhounds. Sports injuries are also becoming more frequently seen in other popular sports including dock diving, flyball, agility competitions, lure coursing, and “backyard athletics” due to the increasing popularity in these sports. Many of these injuries are the same types injuries seen in human professional athletes.

In 2013, over 1.2 million entries were recorded by the AKC (American Kennel Club) for agility competition... and that’s just one organization! Competitions for the average companion canine have become more and more popular in the last decade, leading to an explosion of sports-related injuries and the development of sports medicine specialization in veterinary medicine. The majority of our pets, however, still fall into the “weekend warrior” category. These are the animals whom look forward to mom and dad coming home after long workweek to spend time at the dog park, play fetch, or go for a jog. The “couch potato” pet can also incur sports injuries. In fact, a dog who is

typically inactive can be at an increased risk for injury if they suddenly break into a sprint due to poor conditioning.

The most common sports-related injuries involve joint or muscle injury. Ligament tears in the knee are one of the most prevalent, but elbow and shoulder



injuries, hip problems, fractures, slipped or herniated spinal discs, and dislocated joints are also common. Young dogs can develop growth abnormalities and other developmental issues due to problems with the growth plates. Lacerations, bite wounds and other non-orthopedic traumas can occur as well. For any suspected injury, it is best to see your family veterinarian or a sports medicine specialist for an evaluation as soon as possible. They may recommend a consultation with a board-certified surgeon to discuss options for your pet, such as minimally-invasive surgery, arthroscopy, or joint replacement if severe damage has occurred. Even fractures can be repaired minimally-invasively by an orthopedic surgeon with

new, state-of-the-art diagnostics and surgical equipment. Arthroscopy can also be used to treat many injuries and issues with minimal discomfort for the patient. Shoulder ligament injuries and instability, elbow bone chips, tarsal (ankle) and hip injuries, and even hip and elbow dysplasia can be treated with minimally invasive arthroscopy.

Often patients with sports injuries will benefit from rehabilitation, or “rehab”, after surgical repair. Physical therapists or veterinarians trained in animal rehabilitation are a great resource to help your pet recover as quickly as possible. In addition, therapists and doctors trained in rehabilitation can help develop a conditioning program to get you dog at the perfect weight and physical condition, reducing the chance of future injury. Following a rehabilitation evaluation, a treatment plan may be formulated to help your pet safely return to maximum performance. For many conditions, treatment options include underwater treadmill exercise, cold laser therapy, hands-on joint and soft tissue mobilizations, and instructions in a home program to compliment clinical treatments.

No matter what your pet’s level of activity, there is a risk for sports-related injuries. Keep your pet in good body condition and monitor them closely for any signs of lameness, difficulty rising, difficulty going up and down stairs, abnormal gait, or stiffness. Check with your veterinarian if you suspect a sports-related injury to determine what treatment may be necessary to get your pet back to an active lifestyle!