

Hip Evaluation Package

Canine hip dysplasia is one of the most common orthopedic problems seen in large breed dogs. There are several different methods used to evaluate dogs for hip dysplasia. The most widely-used technique, called "OFA certification," involves taking x-rays of the hips (generally under heavy sedation) with the hind legs extended. Unfortunately, this technique has now been shown to be fairly inaccurate. For example, in one recent study of Labrador Retrievers, 55% of dogs scored as having OFA "normal" hips at 2 years of age went on to develop hip arthritis later in life. Also, OFA films can only be scored in a dog older than two years, when it is already too old for some surgical treatments.

An **innovative, more comprehensive** technique for hip evaluation is the PennHIP method. This also involves taking hip x-rays under heavy sedation, but includes several additional views to more accurately test for "laxity" (loose-ness) of the hip joints. Laxity indicates the presence of hip dysplasia, before arthritis even develops. **PennHIP x-rays can only be taken by a veterinarian certified in this special technique.** The films are submitted for analysis and a numerical "distraction index" (DI) score is assigned. This method has been shown to be a **better predictor of hip problems (ie. arthritis) later in life** than the OFA method. Another major advantage to PennHIP is that these x-rays can be taken as early as 16 weeks of age.

High risk breeds (Labrador Retrievers, Golden Retrievers, German Shepherds, and other large dogs), future breeders, and any dog with signs of hip problems are excellent candidates for hip screening. **Young dogs with hip dysplasia often "bunny hop" when they run, are reluctant to jump up, have wobbly hind limbs when they walk, and may have limited tolerance for exercise.** Many different surgical and non-surgical treatments are available to treat dogs with hip dysplasia. Specific recommendations depend on age, severity, desired use of the dog, results of hip palpation, and x-ray findings.

A relatively new, minimally invasive surgery called Juvenile Pubic Symphysiodesis (JPS) has been shown to help improve hip joints in dogs with dysplasia - it generally should be performed between 14 & 18 weeks of age. Another surgical option is a Triple Pelvic Osteotomy (TPO), which is a more involved procedure with a similar outcome. In most cases, TPO surgery is performed prior to one year of age. Other surgeries, such as total hip replacement, can be performed at any age and are generally reserved for mature dogs. **Having your dog's hips evaluated at a young age will provide information at a time when you have the most treatment options, should he/she be diagnosed with hip dysplasia.** PennHIP x-rays can also be taken in adult dogs.

Our hospital offers a "Hip Consultation Package" by board-certified veterinary surgical specialist Dr. Cheri Nielsen. This **\$475 package** (2011 pricing), includes initial consultation, sedation, PennHIP x-rays with both in-house evaluation and analysis at the University of Pennsylvania, and discussion of treatment options with follow-up recommendations by phone once the official results are available.

If you have been referred to PESCM by your family veterinarian, please request that they fax a copy of your pet's medical records including any previous orthopedic x-rays, and lab reports. You should pick up a copy of any x-rays from your regular clinic and bring those with you to the appointment. A referral is NOT required – you can also schedule an appointment directly with Dr. Nielsen and we will be happy to contact your regular clinic for records as needed. Do not feed breakfast the morning of the appointment – water and medications are allowed. Plan to leave your dog with us for a few hours that day after the appointment.

Surgery Specialty Services

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