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"Jess" - Collie with cruciate ligament damage



The cruciate ligament is the main stabilising structure of the knee in both humans and dogs. In humans cruciate ligament injury is almost exclusively associated with sport, principally football and ski-ing. Given that none of my patients participate in these human activities (as far as I am aware) you may be surprised to learn that cruciate ligament rupture is the most common orthopaedic injury of the dog.

So when "Jess" Chamberlain was presented at the surgery with an acute onset right hindleg lameness the presumptive diagnosis of cruciate ligament damage was quickly confirmed by x-ray and examination under sedation. Her owners assured me she hadn't been participating in any sporting activity.

With "Jess" being 11 years old and having somewhat overindulged over the festive season she slotted neatly into the most common group of cruciate damage we see in dogs; namely that of the middle aged overweight patient! Good reason to avoid this category wherever possible whether canine or not!

Unfortunately this category of patient also has a higher risk of developing the same injury in the opposite leg; perhaps due to the fact that the "good leg" has to bear more weight whilst supporting the affected limb. I noticed from the x-rays that "Jess's" good knee had some mild degenerative changes and alerted her owners to the possibility of future problems. Even I was surprised however when "Jess" was returned to the surgery only 4 days later now hobbling badly on the Left hindleg! In such a large dog with both legs now affected surgery is the best solution. The worst affected knee was selected (Left) and repaired using nylon and a metal crimp.

Currently recovering much more rapidly than expected it remains to be seen whether "Jess" will ever return to the ski-slopes. Despite Jess and their owners misfortune they are at least sensible enough to have the insurance company pick up most of the £800 bill. I will certainly be checking the small print on my medical insurance when I take to the ski-slopes next month!

Terry Dunne BVMS, Cert SAO, MRCVS

This article is available on the Fairfield Veterinary Centre web site at www.fairfield-vets.co.uk

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