



Elbow dysplasia is a common and often debilitating joint disease affecting many larger breed (usually pedigree) dogs. Affected dogs have a genetic tendency to develop the disease but the severity of the disease can be influenced by other factors. The Kennel Club (KC) introduced the elbow dysplasia scoring scheme to identify affected dogs at an early stage so that they could be prevented from breeding and passing the condition to their puppies. The scheme has been widely adopted by several breed societies.

What is elbow dysplasia (ED)?

Elbow dysplasia is the collective name for a group of developmental orthopaedic conditions affecting young dogs of medium and large breeds. The common conditions of the developing elbow joint are:

- Osteochondrosis of the humeral condyle (OC)
- Fragmentation of the medial coronoid process of the ulna (FCP).
- Ununited anconeal process of the ulna (UAP)

How do I know if my dog has ED?

The most usual early sign of elbow dysplasia is lameness in one or both of the front legs. As well as causing elbow pain in their own right, dogs with elbow dysplasia often develop arthritis which may cause severe lameness and stiffness in later life. In many cases the underlying lesion goes undetected either because there are no signs, or because the condition affects both front legs and therefore the lameness is unrecognised by the owner.

How can elbow dysplasia be prevented?

The only way to eliminate this condition is to avoid breeding from affected animals. Since these diseases have a proven and strong genetic component, x-ray screening for elbow dysplasia is an important means of detecting affected dogs before they can be used for breeding. The scoring may be carried out at the same time as screening for hip dysplasia but animals must be at least one year old. In many breeds most individuals are affected and so selective breeding, ie breeding from those individuals with less severe disease is required. The British Veterinary Association (BVA) and the Kennel Club (KC) set up the elbow dysplasia scoring scheme to help identify suitable breeding dogs. The scheme classifies the severity of disease in individual dogs so that selective breeding can be applied.

If you are thinking of buying a pedigree puppy find out if elbow dysplasia is likely in your chosen breed and enquire about the elbow score status of the parents before considering purchase. This can reduce the risk of elbow dysplasia developing in your puppy although it still possible for two parents with very low elbow scores to produce puppies with elbow dysplasia.

If you want any other information on health issues concerning your dog please contact Unicorn Vets on 023 8034 3434 and we will be happy to advise you.