

DAVIES

The Veterinary Specialists

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Neutraceuticals - Dietary Supplements

We look at the evidence behind using supplements to help promote joint health in dogs.

Neutraceuticals is a term used to describe a naturally occurring food supplement marketed as having a beneficial effect on health.

As physiotherapists we often provide advice and guidance on appropriate use of dietary supplements, importantly, based on the available evidence base.

Why use neutraceuticals?

Feeding additional supplements can provide nutritional help to support diseased musculoskeletal tissues. Most commonly, joint health is the focus of concern and many products have been promoted as having a beneficial impact on joint health. It is important to look closely at these claims and the evidence base behind them



These substances are aimed at preserving joint tissue and not reversing damage. Ideally they would be started early when osteoarthritic changes are suspected and continued long term.



Regulation of quality...

Importantly, nutraceuticals are not regulated as pharmaceuticals (medications) and, therefore, are not held up to the same regulatory restrictions as veterinary medicines. With this in mind, it is important to appreciate the huge range of composition and quality of available products. This information can then be used to select the most effective nutraceuticals for your pet.

Diet and joint health

The most effective dietary supplements can have beneficial impacts on joint tissues. Across the range of supplements, each may have a slightly different mechanism of action. In general these compounds reduce inflammatory mediators, which have a degradative impact on joint tissue which is protective to cartilage (chondroprotective). Clinical trials have demonstrated that some nutraceuticals can improve weightbearing through affected limbs and reduce the reliance on non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAIDs) medication, such as metacam.



Common nutraceuticals and their evidence base...

Omega 3 fatty acids (Importantly DHA and EPA) – have the strongest evidence base and consistency for their clinical impact on dogs with osteoarthritis. Clinically, supplementation has improved weightbearing in affected joints and reduced the need for anti-inflammatory medication. Importantly, the best source of Omega 3 is from wild rather than farmed oily fish.

Glucosamine hydrochloride & Chondroitin sulphate (GH and CS) – Have shown a positive impact on inflammation and cartilage metabolism in scientific trials, but products are often widely varied in GH and CS levels, making comparison of clinical results and conclusions difficult to draw summary from.

Green lipped mussel extract (GLM) – Contains omega-3 fatty acid along with other chondroprotective agents and have shown some beneficial impact in management of osteoarthritic dogs. There remain some inconsistencies in the evidence base, making it more difficult to draw conclusion about the strength of the evidence.

Take home messages

- Nutraceuticals are potentially helpful in the management of degenerative joint disease
- Nutraceuticals aim to moderate ongoing joint degeneration and will not regenerate already damaged tissue
- Nutraceuticals are not regulated as medicines and as such there is a wide variety with varied content of effective ingredients
- Fully understanding the evidence base behind each allows a better informed decision about their potential use



At Davies Therapy and Fitness Centre, our Therapy team will assess your dog, provide helpful exercise guidance and utilise a variety of treatment techniques to help your pet achieve their goals.

To find out more visit vetspecialiststherapy.co.uk

Ask your vet about a referral today.

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