

BASIC INFORMATION

Description

Bicipital tendinopathy (BT) is a disease of middle-aged, large- and giant-breed dogs. The biceps tendon attaches the biceps muscle to the scapula (shoulder blade).

Causes

Most cases of BT result from chronic, repetitive injury, similar to human BT disease in athletes such as baseball pitchers or tennis players. The tendon is strained and torn in microscopic amounts, which leads to inflammation and pain. With time, osteoarthritis occurs and further increases pain and loss of mobility in the shoulder.

Clinical Signs

Variable degrees of lameness are observed. The lameness usually worsens with vigorous activity.

Diagnostic Tests

Manipulation of the shoulder may reveal loss of mobility and pain. Pain in the shoulder usually increases noticeably when pressure is placed on the biceps tendon while the leg is flexed.

TREATMENT AND FOLLOW-UP

Treatment Options

Injection of glucocorticoids (steroids that reduce inflammation) into or around the tendon may resolve the lameness, but strict rest for a minimum of 4-6 weeks is critical to allow the tendon time to

fully heal. Repeated injections may be required. If an acceptable response is not observed after 3-4 injections, surgery is recommended. About 40% of affected dogs do not respond to steroid injections.

Surgical therapy involves releasing (cutting) the tendon so that it is not constantly irritated as the leg is used. Release of the biceps tendon can often be done easily by arthroscopy (involving passage of a tiny fiberoptic viewing scope into the joint). Your pet may be referred to a veterinary orthopedic surgeon for this procedure.

Follow-up Care

Steroid injections must be followed by strict restriction of exercise for a minimum of 4-6 weeks. If surgical release of the tendon is performed, exercise is restricted to short leash walks only for 4 weeks to allow the shoulder to fully heal. If signs of inflammation (excessive redness, pain, swelling, or discharge) are observed at the site of a surgical incision, notify your veterinarian. Sutures or staples are commonly removed 10-14 days after surgery.

Prognosis

Prognosis for return to full activity is very good.