



LUXATING PATELLA

What is a luxating patella?

The patella, or knee cap, should be located in the centre of the knee joint. The term "luxating" means out of place or dislocated. Therefore, a luxating patella is a knee cap that moves out of its normal location.

What causes this to occur?

When you flex and extend your knee using the thigh muscles, your knee cap (patella) transfers the force by sliding up and down in a groove on top of the femur.

When the patella luxates, the knee cap is pulled out of the groove to the inside of the knee. Breeds of dogs with shallow patella grooves and bowed legs are predisposed to this condition because the big thigh muscles pull the patella to the inside of the leg rather than straight up and down the leg. This abnormal movement pulling on the inner side of the groove wears it down or the ligament holding the patella in place stretches and the patella is free to pop out of the groove and is dislocated. When it pops out the dog has difficulty walking on the leg. It may learn how to kick the leg and pop the patella back into its normal location. However, because the groove is gone, it dislocates again easily.

Does a luxating patella cause any long-term problems for my dog?

Some dogs can tolerate this problem for many years. However, with the wearing and damage done by the patella dislocating and relocating the joint often becomes arthritic and painful. If the patella eventually cannot relocate itself then the abnormal pressures on the knee joint cause the leg to grow more bowed and the problem gets worse and harder to correct.

Can a luxating patella be corrected?

Surgery should be performed if your dog has a persistent lameness or if other knee injuries occur secondary to the luxation.

Surgical repair.

1. The groove in the femur is deepened so the patella will stay in place.
2. An artificial ligament is made to hold the patella in place.
3. The capsule around the joint is tightened. This last step is important because the joint capsule will have stretched during the period of luxation.
4. Also, if the leg has become significantly bowed then the point of attachment of the patellar ligament is moved and transplanted surgically to its proper location to correct the incorrect alignment.

If the surgery is performed before arthritis occurs, the prognosis is excellent. Your dog should regain full use of its leg. If arthritis has already occurred prognosis is still good but the joint may still be somewhat stiff from the arthritis that was there prior to the surgery, especially in cold weather.