

The Dachshund Back Digest



Frieda, R.I.P. 12/17/1989 - 11/17/2003

This is a digest of several articles written by members of the "Dachshund-L" and "dachsies@" mailing lists in response to inquiries about Dachshund back problems. There are also some case histories and submittals from authors which did not appear on the lists. None of the authors are veterinarians, the information should only be regarded as opinions of people who have experience with Dachshund back problems. This document is copyrighted and publication in whole or part is prohibited except by permission of the author or authors.

Original version posted on the WWW in November 1995, last modified on 23 January 2005. Author: Sam Watson [samwtx at bajaokla dot com] (Address obscured to foil junk emailers, replace 'at' with '@' and 'dot' with '.')

New in this update is an external link to the [Center for Paralysis Research at Purdue University](#). There is also a direct link to a recent paper published by Dr. Richard Borgens and others relating to research being done on spinal cord injury at the Center. This encouraging work shows much promise for dogs (and eventually humans) which have had spinal cord trauma and are seen for treatment within 72 hours of the injury. Browse the entire CPR site for more enlightening information on canine paralysis research.

The photo above is a memorial to our beloved Frieda, who was killed by a coyote in her backyard in November 2003. She was the reason this web page was created in 1995 and we will always treasure the 13 years and 11 months she spent here with us. She never had another back problem after the two episodes in 1995 and lived a full and healthy life.

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Introduction

Acknowledgments:

"Homeopathic Case History" is a rehabilitation case narrated by Pat Kearney, a long-time breeder of standard smooths. See the link in the Table of Contents.

We would also like to invite you to read the soft cover breed book "Dachshunds" - Volume 10 in the Popular Dogs Series from the editors of Dog Fancy Magazine. This author and a number of our mailing list friends were interviewed by Eve Adamson for the "Oh My Aching Back" article and The Dachshund Back Digest was cited (although the URL is now changed). The book is carried by pet supply stores like PetsMart.

Thanks to Linda Stowe and Betty Potts for Prairiedachs owner's manual. And to Dena Delgado for the list of "Don'ts." Thanks to David Candline for contributing the Teckel Tales article and the vitamin information. Mickey Howard supplied the Vitamin C and Ester-C studies, and James Harrell contributed the fenestration case history and supporting data (they are on separate URLs to save time loading this page). Billy, Neva Castille, and 'Rebel' supplied the plans to Rebel's Ramp. And thanks to all the owners of downed and ailing Dachshunds who have related their experiences so the rest of us could learn ...

The USENET Dachshund FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) written by Steve Michelson is posted regularly on rec.pets.dogs.info and also at <http://www.faqs.org/faqs/dogs-faq/breeds/dachshunds/>

Although the authors of this web site have a fair amount of experience with Dachshund back problems, the first and most important piece of advice is to read the [DCA Canine Intervertebral Disk Disease](#) web page. This extensive article is a must read for any Dachshund owner - before your dog is stricken! It tells you in detail what is wrong with Dachshund disks (they're genetically disposed to herniate or rupture), and all about the clinical stages of IVDD at various levels of seriousness. The URL is: <http://dachshund-dca.org/diskbook.html>

A LITTLE INTERVERTEBRAL DISK TUTORIAL

At 03:36 PM 1/19/96 PST, you wrote:

A friend of mine here at work has a dachsie and he recently had a slipped disc. The vet figured it out after \$150 worth of blood work. Is there anything you can do to prevent this happening again. I told her I would call on my friends here and see if you can offer any help. He is doing great now, but she would like to prevent it from happening again. Thanks for your help.

Dachshunds and several other breeds (Bassets, Pekingese I can recall) are genetically predisposed to have herniated and ruptured disks. This condition, "chondrodystrophy," is characteristic of dwarfism and is also witnessed in humans. Basically, the outer layer of the disk is thinner than normal. Also, some specific dogs

have a hardening of this outer layer called "calcification" that makes the disk more brittle than it should be. This condition shows up on x-rays to vets who are familiar with it. The DCA pamphlet on "Canine Intervertebral Disk Disease" tells us that 25% of Dachshunds will have at least one episode of disk herniation or rupture in their lifetime.

The combination of thin and brittle disks in some dogs means that they will have a herniation or rupture of a disk, usually in the 2 to 7 year ages, with peak chances of occurrence at around age 4. When this occurs, the disk is not "slipped" - the outer layer tears and a bubble of gelatinous nuclear material protrudes. Since the thinnest portion of any disk is that area adjacent to the spinal cord, this is where the protrusion (herniation) takes place. This finger of material presses against the spinal cord causing pain and, in severe instances, degrees of loss of neurological function (incoordination, paralysis, loss of bowel and bladder control). In more serious cases the bubble ruptures and nuclear material is ejected forcefully into the spinal canal and traumatizes the spinal cord.

This latter situation is an emergency, the dog will usually be paralyzed, and treatment must begin immediately by a vet who knows Dachshunds. This is not the time to dither and hope it improves, you have a few hours before the inflammation constricting the spinal cord will cause it to begin to die from lack of nutrition. After this happens, the prognosis for recovery is guarded. Treatment usually includes steroids to quickly reduce the swelling so that circulation in the spinal canal can be restored.

If your dog is exhibiting incoordination or paralysis and you and your vet surgeon are agreed that surgery is an option, then the next step is a myelogram. A myelogram (x-ray using an injection of radio-opaque dye in the spinal canal) will confirm the rupture and indicate which disk is affected. Surgery can produce a rapid and near complete recovery if it is performed within 24 hours of the injury. It is expensive, and is just not an option for a lot of people, and there are many cases of substantial recovery without surgery. For this reason, one has to rely on the opinion of an experienced vet orthopedic specialist who has done a lot of Dachshund backs.

Sadly, many owners can't contemplate the thought of a paralyzed dog and the possibility that it may never use its rear limbs again. In a well-intentioned attempt to save the animal suffering, many Dachshunds are needlessly put down right away. This is tragic, because many (possibly most, I don't know the statistics) paralyzed Dachshunds who are given a few months to recover will gain adequate mobility. Some recover to near normal mobility. But there are a few who remain paralyzed in the rear for the rest of their days, and as some of our members can relate, they were and are just as wonderful pets as they were before. You see, it is the humans who get their emotions all tangled up when they see paralysis. When the pain of immediate injury is past, the dog doesn't know it's paralyzed, and doesn't care about it at all. They adapt, and with adjustments on the part of their humans, continue to be fulfilling companions with high quality of life.

[Our Frieda had surgery twice in the first five months of 1995, recovering from paralysis in nine days the first time, and in 5 days the second time. The second time, the surgeon "fenestrated" (deflated) seven other disks to lessen the chance that she would have another episode]

In the cases where surgery is not recommended or elected, and in most herniation or non-paralysis cases, the immediate treatment is anti-inflammatory medication and CONFINEMENT. The dog spends two to four weeks in an airline kennel large enough to turn around in, only going out to eliminate several times daily. The confinement is absolutely necessary to allow the herniated disk time to heal so that it doesn't further traumatize the spinal cord or rupture. After this two to four week period, the dog may gradually be allowed to resume activity, and if impairment exists therapy can begin.

If your Dachshund has no bladder or bowel control, you will have to guard against infection occasioned by urine pooling in the bladder especially during this period of inactivity. Your Vet or an animal technologist

can teach you how to express the bladder manually. Fortunately, in a lot of cases the first positive sign of recovery will be a return of bladder and bowel control.

Dachshunds that have had an episode of disk disease are forever at risk for a recurrence and must be trained and prevented from behaviors that stress the back. Of the remainder of the Dachshund population, it is not possible to say that a particular dog is not at risk. So all Dachshunds should be made to follow precautions. This list is certainly not all-inclusive:

1. No jumping off furniture or beds. This is the likely cause of most back injuries. Yes, it is difficult to stop a Dachshund from doing this. Many of our members have built carpeted ramps up to their beds and couches. Our minis have been trained to wait until they are picked up by a human to get up on a bed or couch. This is a topic for obedience class :-)
2. No climbing long stairs up or down, use gates at stairways, and carry the dog up and down. With minis this is especially important. On walks, lift minis over high curbs.
3. No yard play which involves leaping.
4. No standing on the hind legs and begging. This compresses the spine.
5. Do not hold a Dachshund vertically, thereby compressing its spine.
6. The correct way to carry a Dachshund keeps its spine horizontal. Pick the dog up with two hands, one under the deepest part of its chest letting forepaws dangle, and the other supporting its waist or rear legs. Minis can be tucked in the crook of the elbow in a "football" carry.

I hope you and your friend find this information useful. The precautions are worth all the time and trouble, believe me. I have witnessed the dismal results of not following them and am forever changed by the experience.

Best wishes, Sam, Frieda, and Claire

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THE DACHSHUND DISK DISEASE DILEMMA

This article first appeared on the dachsies@ mailing list in June 1996 as part of a discussion having to do with the relative merits of the surgical, non-surgical, and alternative treatments for disk disease.

I would like to offer my .02 USD on the recent discussion of the dilemma of the Dachshund owner who is faced with the decision of how to react when their beloved pet is writhing in pain or paralyzed with an undiagnosed but possible ruptured disk.

First, let's bound the situation I am addressing by saying that all that follows concerns a case of severe incoordination or paralysis. I have written previously that a Dachshund owner has not reached the surgery/no surgery decision point until incoordination or paralysis is exhibited. Until that point, the conservative approach is to crate, medicate with an anti-inflammatory (steroid if you are aggressive, aspirin if not), and wait for either improvement or degradation.

Being an engineer by training and mentality, for a moment I want to cut through the emotion and pre-dispositions toward surgical intervention (immediate gratification, or not), and alternative treatment (chance of recovery without the risks and expense of surgery).

When a Dachshund loses motor function in its rear limbs (the most common instance), something physical, not mystical, has taken place. The nucleus pulposa has been ejected from the center of the disk (due to rupture) or has protruded (due to herniation) and has traumatized the spinal cord, which is a bundle of

nerves. The body has reacted to this invasion of the spinal canal with inflammation around the site of the injury.

This inflammation causes swelling and constriction of the spinal cord and loss of circulation of spinal fluid around the injury. The spinal cord, by this time, has shut down completely or partially below the site of the constriction. If the loss of circulation is allowed to persist, the spinal cord or the branch of nerves in the vicinity will die from lack of nutrition supplied by the spinal fluid.

All our effort at this emergency point should be directed toward restoring circulation in the spinal canal by reducing inflammation either with medication, or, if we are aggressive, immediate removal of the irritant by surgery.

The dilemma is here: will medication and confinement alone lead to recovery, or will surgery be the best option? What about alternative therapy? My experience gathered by research and witnessed on dachsies@, reconfirmed by Cherri's recent post, and our other members who have seen many, many blown backs, is that each case is different.

As I see the options:

1. What if I do nothing but wait and hope? Worst possible choice. Dog may get better, but also spinal cord may suffer preventable damage. Possible results range from complete recovery to complete paralysis, intolerable pain, euthanasia. This is the "tincture of time" method, it sometimes works perfectly. This is also the source of the cure for a lot of alternative cure anecdotes. Big risk, better go to 2.

2. Let's medicate for inflammation and crate and wait. This is a big step toward reducing risk of permanent paralysis. Decide if your finances or personal inclination rule out surgery. If so, get very serious about confinement for at least two weeks, maybe as long as six weeks. While doing all this, consider Vitamin C/Ester C, Betacarotene, or other homeopathic remedies. Studies worldwide on Vitamin C/Ester C are very promising. Prepare yourself for physical therapy over a long course. Possible results again range from complete recovery to complete paralysis, intolerable pain, euthanasia.

3. My vet says surgery is indicated. What should I do? Well, let's say this is an option financially for you. You have about 12 hours after the injury to make this decision or it becomes irrelevant. This is because the damage is done to the spinal cord by 12-24 hours after the injury. Surgery after that point cannot revive a spinal cord that is already damaged. I will go out on a limb (ready your slings and arrows) and say that from my research and experience, surgery usually won't make the outcome worse, and it may make it better. I must qualify this statement by saying that this applies "most of the time" because someone will come up with a report of a Dachshund that had to be put down after surgery and attribute it to the surgical technique. This happens. Our vet gave Frieda an 85% chance of recovering her ability to walk after surgery, and she did - twice. About all I can tell you is that if you can afford it, surgery is one of your options. Make sure you are having it done at a center that has lots of Dachshund experience! Again, possible results range from complete recovery to complete paralysis, intolerable pain, euthanasia.

Are Dachshunds genetically predisposed toward disk problems? Yes. Read the DCA's Canine Intervertebral Disk Disease booklet on this. Chondrodystrophy is a Dachshund characteristic. Many of our breeders have expressed a belief that it is possible to breed IVDD resistant lines, and I believe them. But that doesn't change the "predisposition" aspect of the breed, and all Dachshund owners should take precautions. Ask questions about disk disease in the bloodline when acquiring a new pup.

Sam Watson

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THE SURGERY QUESTION:

As per bad back cited above, my worry-wart humans are concerned that given my bad habits, so-so discipline and spare tire I may require surgery sometime in the future. They are researching the topic. Have any of you had said surgery? Did it hurt? Did it work? How much did it cost? And would you put up with it were you me? I'm skeptical.

If your dog is occasionally in pain, then you mainly need to control his activity. Here is a basic list of rules (for all Dachshunds, not just injured ones) that Dena Delgado supplied:

1. No jumping on or off furniture.
2. No long flights of stairs.
3. No jumping and twisting games.
4. No prolonged periods of high activity.
5. Use ramps, or step stools for getting on and off furniture.
6. Carry your dachsie up and down flights of stairs.

Just common sense stuff.

I don't have any statistics, but an overweight Dachshund leaping off the bed several times daily for years has got to be the most frequent path to disk herniation or rupture. Get his weight down to where you can feel his ribs, and change your and his lifestyle to whatever degree necessary to prevent him from leaping from heights. If you do this, then you won't have to see what many of us have seen - your best friend lying on the floor, quivering, whimpering, and crying out if you touch him. A paralyzed Dachshund usually loses bowel and bladder control. At this point many, many Dachshunds are put down by emotionally overwrought owners who just don't know what can or should be done. Get serious, get the 'religion' - with training and precautions this is avoidable.

If the dog is constantly or frequently in pain, but not wobbly on his rear legs, then he may not yet be ready for surgery. He needs a minimum of two weeks of absolute crate rest. If, however, he gets wobbly, then that is the precursor to paralysis, and it is time to get to the specialist vet surgeon for an evaluation.

Paralysis is an emergency, don't dither, it is not going to go away in the morning. Get to the vet orthopedic specialist immediately. The longer the spinal cord is starved for oxygen and glucose by the swelling from the inflammation, the less nerve function there is to return if surgery is performed. If your decision is not to operate, aggressive treatment with anti-inflammation drugs will nevertheless facilitate a more complete recovery and must begin right away.

About surgery: there are no guarantees, the prognosis is best for recovery from paralysis or improvement of incoordination if surgery is performed within 12 hours of the injury. More than 48 hours, and surgery may not be able to reverse loss of nerve function. In these cases, long term therapy has worked wonders. Two of our famous non-surgery survivors are Budge and Wrinkles. They have both returned from paralysis to near normal mobility. What happens here is that the body develops other neurological pathways and other muscles to get things done. There is a lot to say about alternative therapy, but I'll leave that for one of our other members since I'm writing such a book, here.

Some vets may medicate with steroids to reduce inflammation around the spinal cord until the injured disk has time to scar over. These cases may return to mobility without surgery, and there is a school of thought that the success rate of this treatment is equal to the success rate of surgery. Obviously, this is a low-cost alternative.

Frieda ruptured disks two separate times in the first half of 1995, became paralyzed, had surgery, and recovered her ability to walk and run both times. At the evaluations, the surgeon gave her an 85% chance of recovering the use of her rear legs. The surgery and recovery is not painful when compared to the pain they are in anyway. She spent nine days in the hospital the first time and five days the second time. The dogs stay in a hospital kennel until they can urinate without being expressed by a human. The first time, Frieda began to take a few steps the 10th day after surgery. The second time she was walking when they released her at 5 days after. During the second surgery, the vet also fenestrated seven other risky disks in order to prevent another recurrence. The cost here in the Dallas, Texas area at a first-class vet surgical hospital averaged US \$1000 each time. That includes a preliminary evaluation, surgery, hospital stay, and a two month follow-up x-ray.

But in spite of Frieda's good outcome, I can't universally recommend surgery for every Dachshund with a bad back. It is an individual choice that you and your vet must make considering your own dog's symptoms, time since the injury, age of dog, and your financial threshold of pain. Some dogs are operated on and do not improve or are made worse and have to be put down. Some dogs who are not taken to surgery are happy to live full lives as paraplegics in loving homes. As long as they are not in pain, it is of no importance to them that they drag their rear legs or use a cart. They don't know they are disabled, and there are others on this list who can attest to the full quality of life these dogs enjoy.

Cheers, Sam and Frieda

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THE DACHSHUND BACK OWNERS MANUAL (courtesy Linda Stowe and Betty Potts):

Dachshund disc disease is a subject I am very passionate about. I have heard far too much about it since joining this list. It is certainly more prevalent in the breed than I realized. Saturday, when I was at my vets, there was an owner there with his dachsie who was going down. Also, Sunday while attending a dog show, I met some people who had a dachsie with back problems. I wish there was something that could be done. We (myself and several other breeders) had a long discussion about it while eating lunch. Of course, everyone had their own ideas. None of which could be proved one way or the other.

Following is a copy of a pamphlet that my friend Betty Potts (Prairiedachs) gives to all buyers of her babies. She has been raising and showing dachsies in the midwest for 30+ years. She has also sent a copy to the people she has previously sold to. She has kept some charts on all of her dogs and ones that she has sold that have gone down. She does believe it to be hereditary and thinks she has traced it back to one dog in her line, which she now tries to breed away from. I thought it was a pretty good article and wanted to share it with you. I know Sam Watson put out a really good post not too long ago also. I think it is important to stress this as often as possible.

Linda Stowe

Lindox Dachshunds

POINTS FROM PRAIRIEDACHS

This is a note to all my dog friends, and especially to those who have bought dogs from me. I want to give you some information on Dachshund disc problems. As you know, dachshunds are susceptible to spinal injury and also premature aging of the disc.

PREVENTING INJURY:

We can't do much to prevent injury to the spine - except to try to keep our dachsies from jumping - and as you know, that's very hard to do. We can limit the amount of stairs they climb - climbing stairs puts a strain on the dachshund back. I have a ramp from my back door down to my dog yard. Some of my dogs use it, others prefer to use the stairs. Dachshunds should be trained not to jump up on the furniture. If you put them up on the bed (I know they sleep with you), keep them from jumping off - make them wait until you put them down. Avoid rough play. See that children pick up dachsies correctly.

WEIGHT

Too much weight can be hard on the dachshund's back. Keep your dachsies sleek, not thin, but streamlined as dachsies were meant to be. Cut out the goodies, and limit the food to 1/2 to 3/4 cup of food a day for a 10- 11 pound dog. A heavy dog has more stress on the spine because of the additional weight. If your dog looks like a balloon on legs, it's time to cut back on the food.

PREMATURE AGING OF THE DISC

Dachshunds have a condition known as CHONDRODYSTROPHY - "chondro" means cartilage and "dystrophy" means disorder. The cartilage is what makes up the disc. As it ages, it becomes brittle, more likely to rupture. I have read several articles that advise giving Vitamin C and Vitamin E, iron and manganese to help the cartilage and discs stay young. Regular dog food and dog vitamins do not contain Vitamin C. You must add this to your dog's diet. I give Vitamin C and Vitamin E on food every day to each dog. In the past, I gave iron and manganese also, but these minerals became impossible to obtain, so I am not using them at this time. There is a dog vitamin/mineral supplement now available which does contain manganese. It is called Cosequin- check with your vet.

If your dog is going to develop a disc problem, it will usually occur about 4 years of age. If your dog is over 7 years old, and has not had a disc problem, he will probably not develop one. Older dogs sometimes develop disc problems with age. However, I have not found this to be the case with my dogs. Several lived to be 15 years old and never had a back problem.

PREDICTING BACK PROBLEMS

Buttons, at 15, has never exhibited a back problem, but x-rays several years ago (for another ailment) disclosed calcification of several discs. So it seems x-rays will not always predict back problems. More studies should be done on this.

CLASSIFICATION OF DISC PROBLEMS AND AVAILABLE TREATMENTS

Disc problems may be classified as follows:

1. Stage 1 some pain, especially when being picked up.
2. Stage 2 some pain, dog doesn't want to move
3. Stage 3-4 weakness in rear legs - some pain
4. Stage 5-6 weakness in rear legs - no pain
5. Stage 7-8 loss of rear leg movement, but control of bladder & bowel
6. Stage 9-10 complete loss of legs, bladder & bowel control

When you observe any of these symptoms, get your dachshund to your veterinarian immediately!! Time is of the essence. You need to make a decision on treatment right away. With the dog in the latter stages of disc disease, you may wish to opt for surgery. Surgeons at the University of Illinois or other vet schools will

examine your dog and determine treatment.

One of my friends had a dog who became paralyzed in the rear legs. She took the dog to the U of I Small Animal Hospital Clinic where surgery was recommended. It was done immediately, and was very successful. Her dog is running around chasing rabbits that get into her fenced backyard.

There are alternatives to surgery:

1. Rest and medication - anti-inflammatory drugs. Prednisolone, etc.
2. Injections - Adequan, a new medication to promote healing of disc cartilage.
3. Other - Chiropractic and acupuncture have been used - I don't know much about these, but you can investigate.

My experience has been that most dogs will recover the use of their legs. **THERE IS HOPE!!** Rest is most important - confine your dog in a very small space. I use a small wire crate - easy to clean - placed in the kitchen where the dog can see what is going on. For going outside, I use another small wire crate, with the bottom removed, placed on the ground. Sometimes I use an exercise pen folded up to 3' x 3'.

The main thing is to be aware of dachshund disc problems; to know there are various treatments available; and not to give up hope if your dog develops symptoms. It does happen, it is inherent in the breed, but new and better treatments are available. Be sure to contact your veterinarian at the first sign of a sore back in your dachsie.

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THERAPY FOR RECOVERING PARAPLEGIC DACHSHUNDS:

A year ago Lucky had surgery to try to correct a back problem. The surgery was not successful and he was completely paralyzed in his hindquarters. However, a few months ago he began to regain some use in his hind legs. Now he can stand and take a few halting steps. As you can guess, we are delighted and encouraged!

Yes, yes!

Does anyone know of any other stories like this? How much more recovery can we expect? Are there any exercises or manipulations we should be doing with him? Has anything been published re back surgery and recovery in dachsies?

1. Manipulation: roll him on his back and gently work his paralyzed limbs and feet through their range of motion. "Bicycle" his rear legs, if there is enough range of movement. The idea is to keep the muscles from atrophying and to keep the tendons from contracting. Work his feet gently to "uncurl" them so that he walks pads down, not on his knuckles.
2. Hydrotherapy: use a portable spa that sits on the edge of the tub and let the warm water play over his back and hindquarters. You will have to be in the tub with him to do this effectively. Have just enough depth of water in the tub that his toes can touch the bottom.
3. Water walking: in a children's pool, with just enough depth so he can stand, but be supported by the water.
4. Towel walking: sling a towel under his abdomen and walk along with him while he pulls along with his front legs.
5. Acupuncture: several of our members have reported improved mobility after a session.

As he indicates an ability to walk haltingly, practice "come to me" with a treat if needed). Put him down 10 feet from you and urge him to come to you. Gradually increase the distance.

Cheers,

Sam, Frieda, and Claire

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ABBY'S TALE OF RECOVERY:

By David Candline

Here is the story, it appears in the Fall 2000 issue of Teckel Tales, the Eastern Canada Dachshund Club newsletter. There is nothing new about the treatment described; I wrote Abby's tale to remind Dachsy owners that a back episode need not be a death sentence.....

Abby's Tale

When Lori Brosseau called she already knew that she had me over a barrel. You see Lori remembered me ranting about Veterinarians who tell the owners of seriously paralyzed dogs that their only options are surgery (with uncertain results) or euthanasia. My reason for ranting is that we know that where the disk problem is in the lower spine that there is a good chance of bringing a dog back with alternative treatments. Gerry Jefferies showed Beve and me how effective hydro-therapy can be about eight years ago. Thanks to Gerry we have helped two of our own Dachshunds completely recover from paralysis following a disk rupture and I have coached Dachshund owners over the Internet on how to proceed in at least five more cases. So when Lori asked if there was anything to be done, we had to say yes.

Lori's mom, Carol Smashnuk has a lovely standard smooth black and tan Dachshund. Lindenwood's Lady Abigail who will be five years old in November. Carol resides in Sudbury. This summer Abby was stricken with a disk rupture and was paralyzed. The vet put Abby on crate rest and prescribed prednisone. The anti-inflammatory worked very well and Abby made a complete recovery only to be stricken again; this time so seriously that the vet recommended surgery within twelve hours or euthanasia. Carol found herself on the horns of a dilemma. The surgery would be very expensive, there were no assurances that it would work and just as important Abby would need nursing care while in recovery that she could not give her. What to do? Call Lori.

That's how Lady Abigail arrived at our house on the August long week-end, a beautiful Dachshund with no rear-end control whatsoever. She couldn't move her legs, she had no bowel or bladder control and she could not even wag her tail. Abby was also over-weight largely because the steroid treatments she was on was heightening water retention. We told Lori and Carol that we couldn't guarantee results but we were not dismayed by Abby's condition and that we would do everything we could to help bring her around. Our first step was absolute crate rest.

Abby was on a second round of prednisone and we didn't want her to move at all and risk any further injury. That meant carrying Abby outside to manually express her bladder and keeping her in a raised crate with a grated floor so that if she did seep urine she would not be lying in it. The crate rest lasted for about fifteen days. We started Abby on 500mgs of Ester C and 500mgs of glucosamine daily. Since Abby was quite inactive we cut her food intake to half her accustomed daily ration and monitored her weight. The second phase of treatment began with hydro therapy. We have a water circulating gizmo called a turbo-spa

that attaches to the side of the tub. We fill the bath tub dachsy chest high with warm water, position Abby in the middle of a brisk circulating flow of warm water, and let that gentle massage work it's magic. I have found it kills my own back to manage this process from outside the tub, so I jump in with the patient. I estimate I have logged 16 hours with Abby as a bathing partner.

After about two weeks Abby began to develop bladder and bowel control and then she wagged her tail! The third phase of treatment is to start physio-therapy. After each tub session I would lay Abby on her back and work each leg as if she were riding a bicycle up-side down. We repeated this daily starting at about 20 repetitions and slowly working up to 200 a session. We started towel walking Abby, and taking her for walks as she got steadier on her feet. Abby can now out-run me in a sprint. She drives off of both back feet at the same time like a rabbit, but when she walks she uses each rear leg in opposition.

There is a lot more exercise needed before Abby is fully recovered, but Carol will be able to manage her now. I think Abby will be going home on Thanksgiving week-end. So Abby's tale has a happy conclusion.

Except, the other day Beve had a call from some folks enquiring about puppies. They had just put down a miniature four year -old and were heart broken at losing her to a ruptured disk.

David Candline

ALTERNATIVE AND VITAMIN THERAPY

Sam, Here is the Teckel Tales article I promised to send you: The following article appeared in Vol. 18, No. 1 of the fall 1994 newsletter of the Eastern Canada Dachshund Club. The news letter is appropriately named Teckel Tales and it allows reproduction of any of its articles provided that the source is cited.

Oh, My Aching Back!

There is now an encouraging variety of approaches to treating back problems in our dogs. Brigitte Walkley, in another article in this issue, tells of her experience with acupuncture and Bill Roblin has contributed an interesting cross-section of articles from recent Dachshund publications which offer a number of alternatives.

Perhaps the most revolutionary is the drug Adequan. " The use of Adequan in dogs with joint and spinal disease is indeed a miracle " wrote Robert V. Hutchinson, DVM of North Ridgeville, Ohio in an article in the Canine Press. Although, at the time his article was written, Adequan was approved only for use in horses, a prominent orthopedic surgeon stated that it was now the drug of choice for arthritis and joint pain in the canine. It is not a painkiller nor an anti-inflammatory medication; instead of masking pain or acting as an anti-inflammatory drug, it promotes joint fluid production and joint cartilage healing. There are, currently, no known side effects to Adequan.

Adequan is administered intramuscularly on a semi-weekly to weekly basis. The dose is 5mg. of Adequan per kilogram of body weight. The average treatment consists of four to six injections. Clinical improvement is usually seen after the second or third injection. Most individuals continue to improve even after the injection series is completed. Occasionally, an individual may require a booster injection, while others reach an improved state and never need further Adequan medication. "To see a dog that couldn't walk without the support of wheels now running around unaided....shows the magic of the medication."

The Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph is, we understand, currently conducting a trial with Adequan. Dogs included in the trial will apparently have the Adequan administered without charge (the normal cost is about \$25.00 per shot) but must go to the clinic twice a week. Anyone interested in

participating in this trial should contact the OVC, either directly or through their local vet.

Of less concern to Dachshund owners, but of interest to other purebred dog breeders, a recent article in the Journal of the Veterinary Medical Association stated that " the Administration of Adequan to puppies may prevent the development of hip dysplasia. "

In a "Helpful Hint" in the North American Miniature Dachshund Club Digest, Sharon Michael, a Mini breeder in New York who is well known to many ECDC members, credits Beta - Carotene with bringing a dog that had been down in the rear for six months back to her feet. Sharon read about it in an article for people (it is supposed to restore nerves in people with back problems and is recommended by the AMA), so she decided to give it a try since nothing else has worked. The dog was back on her feet in one week, and back to normal in a month. Dosage was 25,000 units Beta - Carotene once a day, along with 500mg. of Vitamin C each morning and evening. These results are particularly interesting as most other treatments are only really effective if started shortly after the injury occurs. Vitamin C, by itself, given orally or by intramuscular or subcutaneous injection, is well recognized for its healing powers. However Dr. William Hood of Australia advocates its intravenous application in conjunction with long-acting corticosteroids and cage rest for Dachshunds with prolapsed discs. Although Vitamin C is not normally recommended for intravenous use, he had been doing so for about nine years without any adverse side effects. He uses this treatment only in dogs that have become partially paralyzed and cannot walk, or are swaying badly. In dogs with just back pain, corticosteroids, rest and oral Vitamin C work just fine.

A daily dose of 1,000 mg. of Vitamin C administered daily works best when given as soon as possible after the injury has taken place. Most dogs went from dragging their hind legs to up and walking in four to seven days and recovery was much quicker than for those dogs treated with corticosteroids and rest alone. In older cases that have been going on for several weeks, the response is not so dramatic; in such cases, he usually uses acupuncture in conjunction with Vitamin C therapy.

Following this treatment, he recommends that dogs be given Vitamin C tablets, 500mg. morning and night, for life. In fact he suggests that it is not a bad idea to put all your Dachshunds on a preventative dose of vitamin C - about 500 mg. daily in tablet or powder form.

One breeder has reported singular success with the oral administration of 2,000 mg. of Vitamin C daily. The 11-year-old bitch had gone down in the back for the third time, having never really recovered from the second collapse. Oral Vitamin C therapy was started immediately, and she responded rapidly; within a month she had recovered to the point that she was approaching her original state, and was in better condition than when she went down the second time.

Finally, in a more dramatic and sophisticated approach the Center for Paralysis Research at Purdue University has developed a device that helps regenerate damaged spinal - cord nerves in paralyzed dogs. The oscillating field simulator, about the size of a lipstick and powered by a dry cell is surgically implanted near the break in the spinal cord; it generates a low voltage current that is periodically reversed to encourage growth on both sides of the injury. About 20 Of the 24 dogs that have had the simulators implanted have shown improvement. The most-improved dogs got an active implant within two weeks of the injury; dogs with injuries more than a month old were less successful.

To what extent these approaches represent an alternative or possibly complementary treatment to the more traditional methods is best left to the veterinarians to decide. However, when faced with soulful stare of a Dachsie that has collapsed with a ruptured disc, you will certainly want to discuss all the options available with your vet.

End of article.

Sam, One of my correspondents sent me this....it may be of interest to visitors to the Dachshund Back Digest site ...

"... as you may know I am a medical publisher & medical writer. I have the opportunity to read many clinical papers (medical & now veterinary.) As a result, I am a convert to giving Dachshunds Ester-C re: disc disease.

"Unfortunately in the past, it would have been easier to pass Ester-C through an electron scanning microscope undetected, than try to slip in Ester-C tablets or Ester-C powder (on/in food) past my two girls (especially the older.)

"I have discovered that QUEST makes a 350mg orange flavoured CHEWABLE tablet. Both the girls think they are getting a treat!!! What a time and frustration saver! I like Quest as a manufacturer, as they are a division of Boehringer Ingelheim and therefore have submitted the product to HPB (our govt. drug regulation agency). As a result, you are reasonably certain of obtaining in the tablets what is claimed on the label.

"Perhaps most of the ECDC members know of the product (I am new to Dachshunds). From my reading I believe there is sufficient evidence to justify the use of Ester-C to prevent and/or minimize disc problems. If some of the members are having Ester-C administration problems, this format may be of considerable help.

All the best,
Ian Currie ..."

End of quoted letter

David K. Candline
Dachsisle Kennels

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REFERENCES

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