

Title: Living with OCD

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Summary: Managing OCD might be more possible than you thought.

OCD is commonly used as a catch-all phrase amongst us humans for anyone who needs to turn light switches on and off or needs to shut doors three times before leaving the house. Whilst that condition DOES exist within the canine world that is not what this article is about.

Osteochondritis dissecans (hereafter referred to as OCD) is a condition which surprises many owners, fills said owners with fear and dread of losing a loved family member and is often, sadly, diagnosed by vets as an untreatable condition when in fact it may be just the opposite. The opposite being treatable without veterinary intervention!

I do not write in a 'cut and paste' way here, I own a dog who suffers from the condition and who I have learned through hard graft and the support of the FOCC, my breeder, my vet and others, to manage.

Before we get onto 'the science part' let's look at a few facts the websites won't tell you:

1. OCD can seem to occur overnight. Whilst it can be an arthritic condition it affects dogs usually in their formative months, and can cause a normally healthy dog to suddenly develop symptoms associated with a geriatric.
2. OCD does not always require surgery. Some vets would love to have you believe that it does, but in a large percentage of cases the treatment is surprisingly simple and inexpensive.
3. A dog with OCD is going to be a financial and social burden - brilliantly this is totally untrue! Read on to find out how.

I'm going to talk specifically about large breed OCD here, although the condition has been known to affect breeds as small as a beagle. If I may take the time to relate my own story I wish that it may give another sufferer hope:

Bugsy came to me aged just over 12 months. The minute she arrived I noticed there was some lameness in her rear right leg. At the time I assumed it came from her being in the boot of a car for her journey over to me from Normandy and her simply being a bit stiff. As the days grew into weeks it became clear that this was not the case, she would happily use three legs as if she had been doing it for some time. A long walk would produce a 'circus dog' effect where she would literally be up on her front legs for days afterwards. Naturally I questioned her breeder who said she'd had no such problem whilst under her care. I couldn't believe that she'd developed such a disability overnight, her breeder couldn't believe that she'd developed such a condition since being with me. It turns out we were both right.

After much soul searching, Bugsy was scheduled for an X-ray, any large breed owner will tell you this is a nail-biting time. Big dogs do not do well under GA. I genuinely thought it would be her hips, this being the condition most Cane Corso owners are told to galvanise themselves for. But no, the results came back as OCD and associated arthritis.

Many of you are familiar with how bones go together, either in a ball and socket or synovial (regular) joint. A joint affected by OCD will not work in the smooth way mother nature designed, it will either have a furry edge to one of the joints (OCD can affect ANY joint but mostly elbows or hocks) or the constant aggravation on the joint will cause a 'joint mouse' kind of like a pearl being formed by a piece of grit in an oyster, it is like a flap of cartilage which develops to protect the 'fuzzy' joint but which ends up causing a problem!

The problem with OCD is it affects babies, dogs just under a year old upwards. Science aside this is DEVASTATING You have a new family member, who you have loved, trained and cared for; and let's be honest here, who cost you a lot of money in the first place. You know surgery is a risky option as you own a large breed (I speak not only from my own experience here but from cases I have been asked to advise on including one lady who sadly lost her beautiful baby at just 9 months old) you know long term medication is going to be an expensive option regardless of insurance and you know that these are the only two options being presented by your vet?

Right now let me issue a disclaimer:

The following statements are based on personal experience and are not those of the FOCC, nor are they recommended.

A vet sees surgical options, if there is no 'joint mouse' to operate on he or she may recommend a course of glucosamine. Depending on where you are in the country this can cost up to ninety to one hundred pounds for one month's supply. Surgery? Well that's a hell of a lot more. No matter how angry I was with my breeder about what happened to Bugsy I still had a lot of respect for her, and listened to her advice. It saved Bugs from the needle in the end....

I'm wittering on so back to the facts:

1. Glucosamine that is prescribed to dogs at 100 pounds a month is available in the same form to us humans a 99pence from a well known health food outlet!
2. Arthritis and OCD suffering dogs both benefit enormously from being fed.....bones! An 80p bone can make all the difference to a dog facing surgery that may cost you thousands.
3. Bed rest. So few vets are willing in this day and age to prescribe the one thing that made a difference to my girl. If you take nothing else from this article please read this. Bugsy was crated for ten weeks. Literally allowed out only to do her business, then release walks only, then if there was a relapse back to the crate for a few weeks.

Bugsy is now doing well, at nearly two years old she is looking forward to a life free from pain. This takes no small management on my part. OCD is a complex and distressing condition, but there are survivors, it can be done. By co-operation between your vet, your determination and your fellow sufferers it may not be the life-threatening condition you were led to believe.

If anyone visiting the FOCC suspects OCD in their animal please first consult a vet. I am, however,

always at your service.

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