

# ASSISTING YOUR DOG WHEN JOINT PAIN STRIKES

Whether your dog has become a senior or is recovering from surgery, there are many simple things you can do at home to make them more comfortable. Here are a few ideas:

- Make sure their dog beds have adequate cushioning. Slip in a piece of memory foam to their existing dog bed for added comfort.
- If you have hardwood or tiled floors, use mats or area rugs in places that your dog lays the most. Ensure that you use an underlay to prevent the carpet from sliding when you or your pet steps on it. This will give your dog traction when they stand up and some cushioning when they lie down.
- Keep your dog's nails trimmed. Longer nails can throw the gait off and put excess pressure on the joints in the legs.
- Gently massage your dog along the spine and through the limbs. The application of heat to a sore joint can be soothing for a dog but never leave the heat source on the dog unattended or for long periods of time.
- Ask your vet to show you how to gently stretch the joints of your dog. This can be helpful in easing stiffness by working the synovial fluid into the joints.
- Let your dog go swimming. This is a great form of exercise as it is non-weight bearing. Your dog can exercise all the muscles without the force of the body weight through the joints.
- Build or purchase a step or a ramp if your dog jumps on or off

their favorite chair or in and out of the car. Carpeting the ramp or step will give your dog the added traction that they need and prevent them from further damaging their joints.

- Purchase or make a sling to help your dog on stairs if you can't physically carry them up and down. The support under their belly will take the pressure off their joints as they ascend or descend.

Vikki Crane-Small  
RMT, SMT, PTS, CHN, CNC

## Lab Tails Petra



Hello! It has been too long since I've updated you on Petra, who was adopted at 9 years old in November 2010, so I thought I'd send along a message. Petra has been a beloved member of our family since we adopted her! She adores our 3 small kids, and even now, being almost 13 years old, she still likes to be in the centre of the action!

Shortly after we adopted Petra, her ACL blew and she needed to have surgery to fix it. We had a dog previously who had been through 2 ACL repairs, so were familiar with the months of physio therapy and gentle reconditioning. She came through the surgery fine although still walks with a limp on her back leg to this day. She has arthritis in her hips and knees at the back, but is on a special diet, supplements and medication to ease the joint pain. Though she is likely physically uncomfortable with arthritis pain, she is

still interested in family life, and likes to be included in our activities.

Petra loves going up to the cottage and chasing the ball in the water – which is great for her joints and for her enjoyment. We say we should put a red bathing suit on her, because as soon as one of the kids enters the water, in she goes with them, walking along beside them, just like an attentive life guard! If she's too tired to keep on swimming with them, she'll lay at the end of the dock and watch to make sure everyone is accounted for.

At home, she loves going on her morning walk, but then is happy to lay on the couch for the rest of the day until the kids get home from school. Then, she is up and at it with them, getting her belly rubs, getting dressed up and of course trying to catch any food that may drop from the table. She happily accepts all attention that we give her, even if it is a tutu and earmuffs, or plastic food on a tablecloth, or lego figures on her back. I often tell her that she can go upstairs or in the other room if the kids are getting too much for her (she is 12 after all), but she stays put, enjoying the action and lapping up any attention!

She is a great ambassador dog as well. We have some neighbours and friends whose kids like dogs but are a bit afraid of them, and she is a wonderful "starter" dog, where they can get used to petting a large dog, without worrying. She seems to sense that the person is reluctant, and acts even more gentle with them. I find she also does that on walks. She is a wonderful walker on a leash, but does get excited about her smells and will occasionally pull the leash to get a closer sniff. If one of our kids is on the other end of the leash, she must sense that, and slows right down, doesn't make any sharp movements, and waits for them to catch up. What a wonderful feeling to know that she is so good with kids and people who aren't sure about dogs.

She has been an absolute pleasure in our lives and we are enjoying her kind spirit, her interest in our family and her gentle ways. She has fit right in from the start and immediately became part of our family. Thanks so much! Melanie

**Petra was surrendered to LRAS because her family wanted to start traveling after they retired. They had owned her since she was 7 weeks old.**