Tackling Canine Sports Injuries

When an injury occurs in an athletic or working dog, a canine sports medicine veterinarian can help to pinpoint the problem, begin treatment and get the dog back on its feet.

“Canine sports medicine focuses on the study of injuries, certain health conditions, nutritional factors and physiologic functions of dogs involved in field sports and working endeavors,” says Robert Gillette, D.V.M., M.S.E., director of the Sports Medicine Program at Auburn University’s College of Veterinary Medicine.

Negative Performance Factors

Gillette cites three negative influences on a dog’s performance. Fatigue diminishes the level of performance by diverting energy and focus away from an activity and to the body so that it can maintain function. Pain causes dogs to alter body movement to minimize discomfort, likely leading to additional gait problems and eventual injury. Lack of drive, when caused by a health condition such as fatigue or pain, diverts attention away from competitive performance or daily task.

“Animals tend to be stoic and often keep from showing pain,” Gillette says. “Dogs’ ability to minimize pain by altering their movement means that owners sometimes are unaware of conditions that can lead to serious injury.”

For example, a minor sprain of the right carpus not only creates an alteration in the movement of that joint but also in the left hip and left tarsus, he says. The back also is affected, since it is the frame through which the alteration is transferred.

“Often the secondary injury is the one presented to the veterinarian, and the original, often minor problem goes unidentified and unaddressed,” Gillette says. “I’ve found that discovering and treating these small problems can result in much better performance from dogs.”

Healthy Body Conditioning

Dogs that are preconditioned for the work they perform are less likely to sustain serious musculoskeletal injuries. “A first step is keeping excess weight off a dog,” says Nestlé Purina Nutrition Scientist Arleigh Reynolds, D.V.M., Ph.D., DACVN, an expert in much better performance from dogs.”

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Nestlé Purina and the AKC Canine Health Foundation Announce Multimillion Dollar Partnership

Nestlé Purina PetCare and the American Kennel Club (AKC) Canine Health Foundation have announced a multimillion dollar partnership that will extend over several years and will help to advance canine health and research.

“Through the partnership, Nestlé Purina and the AKC Canine Health Foundation will work closely together to fund research that could advance the prevention and treatment of disabling and fatal canine diseases, such as epilepsy, heart and orthopedic conditions and cancer, the No. 1 disease-related death in dogs.

“Together with the AKC Canine Health Foundation, we intend to make great strides in furtherring research directed toward preventing and treating canine diseases,” says Dan Christian, D.V.M., Executive Director of the Purina Pet Institute. “We are proud to announce this important partnership that continues Nestlé Purina’s dedication to the advancement of pet health through science and research.”

“Through the years, Nestlé Purina’s support of research, conferences and various programs has contributed a great deal to improving the quality of life for dogs and their owners,” says Howard Falberg, president of the AKC Canine Health Foundation. “We are honored to work with them in this unique and powerful partnership.”

Since 1997 Nestlé Purina has supported numerous programs and research efforts of the AKC Canine Health Foundation. These include sponsoring the National Parent Club Canine Health Conference, which is held every two years in St. Louis; providing canine reference genetic material to researchers worldwide through the Purina DNA Distribution Center; and providing funding to help initiate the Search-and-Rescue Dog Health Fund. This fund supports two three-year studies aimed at learning the health impact on dogs that worked at Ground Zero and the Pentagon following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

The AKC Canine Health Foundation is the largest nonprofit organization in the world that funds exclusively canine health research. Since its beginning in 1995, the organization has raised more than $8.7 million for over 180 canine health research projects.
Common Injuries

Although injuries in sporting dogs often relate to the type of activity for which they are trained, generally the most common areas of injury are the carpus, foot (pads and toes), shoulder and stifle. Among the most well-known injuries, especially for the most common areas of injury, often relate to the type of activity.

One of the major causes of arthritis in the canine knee joint. If a tear occurs in one knee, the ligament in the other knee is likely to tear sometime in the future.

There are two theories about why this is true. One is that it is genetic, meaning the structure of a dog’s stifle may predispose it to this injury,” Gillette says. “The other is that the injury can change a dog’s gait, likely putting more strain on the opposite knee. What we are seeing, however, is that it depends on the reason for the ACL tear. If over a period of time the stifle’s structure produces an ACL tear, it will likely happen in the other knee. If the tear is the result of a traumatic event, more likely the other knee will not go unless it also sustains trauma.”

Even though ACL tears are well-known and relatively common, Gillette indicates there are other injuries that are seen more often but receive less attention. Among those are pad abrasions and lesions, shoulder muscle soreness, and toe and nail bed injuries.


Canine Sports Injuries

continued on page 3

Purina Pro Plan Performance Formulated for Hardworking Dogs

Performance is exceptionally palatable. The diet helps to replace amino acids and carbohydrates used during exercise to help facilitate rapid recovery after strenuous activity. Complete nutrition with vital antioxidants helps support a healthy immune system.

Purina Pro Plan Performance is nutrient-dense, making it highly digestible for maximum nutrient delivery and small, firm stools, and it contains carefully balanced levels of calcium and phosphorus and other minerals for strong bones and teeth. Appropriate levels of vitamin A and omega-6 fatty acids help to promote healthy skin and lustrous coat.

Purina Pro Plan is available in pet specialty stores, from veterinarians and feed dealers. For additional information about Purina Pro Plan, please contact a Pro Plan customer service representative at 1-800-PRO-PALN (1-800-776-7526) or visit the Pro Plan Web site at www.proplan.com.
New Jersey Veterinary Foundation Inducts Five New Members Into Animal Hall of Fame

Our dogs and a horse were recently inducted into the New Jersey Veterinary Foundation’s (NJVF) Animal Hall of Fame. Nominated by New Jersey veterinarians, the animals were chosen based on their contributions to their owners and the community.

“Veterinarians know how much people love animals,” says Neal Beeber, D.V.M., chairman of the New Jersey Veterinary Foundation. “The Hall of Fame is an opportunity to publically acknowledge the special relationships that develop between people and animals, and the comfort, loyalty and friendship that each offers the other.”

Sponsored in part by Nestlé Purina PetCare, the NJVF Animal Hall of Fame was begun eight years ago to showcase examples of the human-animal bond. “Nestle Purina is proud to be a continuing sponsor of this heart-warming event,” says Laura Eirman, D.V.M., Nestlé Purina Regional Veterinary Communications Manager. “The Hall of Fame is a celebration of the important role that animals play in our lives and the special relationship between veterinarians and their clients.”

The winners were chosen in four categories: companion, therapy, professional and hero. They join more than 50 previous inductees into the Animal Hall of Fame. Winners were presented with a plaque, a medal and a commemorative video. Photos and biographies of the winners may be viewed at www.NJVF.org.

The 2003 winners are:
- “Baxter,” a 5-year-old Pekingese owned by Pam McCarthy of Bayonne, N.J., who won in the companion category. Abandoned after he was hit by a car and permanently paralyzed in his back legs, Baxter now gets around with a dog cart. He shows an incredible zest for life as he participates in charity work, teaching others about unconditional love, forgiveness and acceptance.
- “Curtey,” a 7-year-old Australian Shepherd/Chow mixed-breed dog owned by Tara McCullough of Pennington, N.J., who won in the therapy category. Sensitive and intuitive, Curtey attends a school for children with learning disabilities, where she provides love and support to children who struggle academically and helps educate them about positive social behavior.
- “Cherokee,” a 26-year-old half-Arabian horse owned by the Hunterdon County Therapeutic Riding Program in Pittstown, N.J., who also won in the therapy category. Like many of the students in the riding program, Cherokee is handicapped, having lost an eye in a pasture accident. She has helped many students build self-confidence, particularly one young boy who was visually impaired due to a brain tumor.
- “Daytona,” a 6-year-old Dalmatian owned by Alison Cozzolino of Linwood, N.J., who won in the professional category. Daytona takes part in fire safety programs by teaching children how to stop, drop and roll and how to crawl on their bellies if there is smoke in a room.
- “Dino,” a 3-year-old German Shepherd Dog owned by Dino Donow of Mahwah, N.J., who won in the hero category. A member of the Bergen County Police Department Canine Unit Dino, will retire later this year. Dino has earned the title hero numerous times by putting his life on the line to protect his partner and fellow officers. The animals were honored in March at a program attended by more than 400 veterinarians, veterinary technicians and guests. Photographer Kim Levin, who specializes in pet portraits that capture the unique personality of animals, was the keynote speaker.

Visit the Nestlé Purina booth at Product Day on the 18th and at Open House on the 19th.
Nestlé Purina Funds Nutrition Center at Tufts University

A new nutrition center funded by Nestlé Purina PetCare at Tufts University’s Foster Hospital for Small Animals in North Grafton, Mass., is helping to enhance the veterinary nutrition program.

The Tufts Nutrition Center, which opened in January, is conveniently located within the teaching hospital where Tufts clinicians treat more than 22,000 animals a year. Efficiently organized to streamline diet preparation, the Nutrition Center promotes the teaching of different canine and feline diets and their applications in wellness management and dietary management of certain health conditions.

Nestlé Purina Regional Veterinary Communications Manager Laura Eirmann, D.V.M., says, “Both Tufts University and Nestlé Purina have the mutual goal of better understanding the role of nutrition, not only in the maintenance of healthy pets but also in the critical care management and recovery of ill cats and dogs. The Tufts Nutrition Center is an opportunity for both institutions to share the science that helps to achieve this goal.”

Lisa Freeman, D.V.M, Ph.D., DACVN, associate professor of clinical sciences says, “The Nutrition Center is a boost to our nutrition program. While the former nutrition area was located in a small part of one of our hospital wards, the new Nutrition Center is both convenient and beautifully organized.”

Besides having a sleek appearance and efficient organization, the Nutrition Center features Plexiglas canisters for holding and dispensing dry formulas and glide-out vertical drawers with adjustable shelves for various can sizes and boxes of soft-moist product. Modules containing wire and Plexiglas gravity-fed can dispensing units ensure stock rotation and fresh product usage.

Appliances include a dishwasher, refrigerator, microwave oven, blender and a recycle center. A computer center allows students to access the latest nutrition information, use nutrition software, and calculate nutritional requirements for patients.

The Tufts Nutrition Center is one of four veterinary nutrition centers nationwide that Nestlé Purina has funded through the Nestlé Purina Veterinary College Program. Others are located at Michigan State University, Colorado State University, and the University of California-Davis.

Students Take Time Out for Fun At SAVMA Symposium

Fun and excitement were a big part of the activities at the Student American Veterinary Medical Association (SAVMA) Symposium. More than 1,600 veterinary students attended the event, which was held March 20 to 22 at the University of Georgia.

Besides attending lectures and wet labs, students participated in athletic and academic competitions, including the SAVMA Challenge sponsored by Nestlé Purina, and field trips. A highlight was the opening gala Nestlé Purina Casino Night, where students played blackjack, roulette and poker to win prizes. Music and a buffet dinner helped to create a festive atmosphere.

Nestlé Purina was a Diamond Level Sponsor — the highest level of sponsorship — of the symposium. Among the give-aways at the Nestlé Purina booth were copper coffee mugs, syringe-shaped highlighters and squeezable “stress” bones, plus literature on Purina Veterinary Diets™ brand Canine and Feline Formulas, the Purina Life Span Study, and Body Conditioning Score charts revised to reflect learnings from this landmark study.

Additionally, three veterinary students won handheld computers in daily drawings held at the Nestlé Purina booth. The winners were Julie Kroll of the University of Illinois, Roslyn Biggs of Oklahoma State University and Caitlin Roberts of the University of Pennsylvania.

Mentor Day at Colorado State University Benefits Students and Mentors

Veterinary students and their mentors — practicing veterinarians who are members of the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association — took part in Mentor Day on March 29 at Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

“The idea was to foster the relationship between the mentors and students during the full day of events,” says second-year student and organizer Scott Rizzo. The program included lectures and a wet lab on radiosurgery, plus opportunities for students and mentors to work together and for students to ask their mentors questions about their work.

The Mentor Program, which began a few years ago, pairs students with veterinarians who practice in their field of interest. Students are matched with veterinarians after completing a questionnaire. Participating veterinarians include general practitioners, epidemiologists, surgeons, radiologists, dermatologists, ophthalmologists, pathologists, and industry veterinarians. Students meet with their mentors at their veterinary clinics or at local veterinary conferences. Currently, 94 veterinary students take part in the program.

Nestlé Purina was one of the sponsors of Mentor Day.