

ORTHOPETS HOBBLE VEST FOR MEDIAL SHOULDER INSTABILITY

Medial shoulder instability (MSI) is similar to a rotator cuff injury in people with one important difference. Dogs bear 60 percent of their weight on their shoulders (divided over the 2 legs) and people bear no weight. The canine shoulder is supported by large muscles on the outside (lateral) and very little muscle on the inside (medial or armpit area). The MSI injury usually involves the medial glenohumeral ligament; it's job is to help keep the limb tucked in next to the body (adducted limb) instead of splayed out wide (abducted limb). The pectoral (chest) and subscapularis muscles also help with this.

Clinical signs of medial shoulder instability range from relatively minor to non-weight bearing lameness. Lameness is often worse after exercise and not responsive to usual treatment (NSAIDs). Another common sign is refusing tight turns. Specific tests are performed to make this diagnosis. Radiographs may be done to rule out other injuries, but are of little value in confirming MSI diagnosis. The diagnosis is made by abducting the limb from the body and comparing to the normal limb.

Minor injuries resolve with rest, restricted motion of the shoulder, and rehabilitation. Injuries with significant instability of the shoulder require restricted motion of the shoulder, rehabilitation, and in some cases, surgery. These injuries are slow to heal and significant muscle atrophy is expected with restricted motion. Because of this, rehabilitation is a must.

Restricted shoulder motion is achieved using a shoulder orthosis called an OrthoPets Hobble Vest. This vest limits forward and sideways stretch of the limbs so injured tissue can heal. Both thoracic (front) limbs are restricted because the injured leg is tethered to the uninjured leg. Duration of use of the vest depends on severity of injury and ranges from 2-4 months. This will be determined by your attending veterinarian and rehabilitation team.

Because an orthosis is not the correct therapy for all patients, before choosing an orthosis the following points are important to keep in mind:

- 1. This device should only be used under the direction and supervision of a veterinarian.**
- 2. The device MUST be put on and removed daily: Initially most patients wear the vest 24/7 with several breaks during the day. During these breaks your dog should not be allowed to stand.**
- 3. Follow-up is critical to success.** An orthosis is considered a “durable medical device.” This means that proper use is necessary to meet therapeutic goals and to ensure its safe application. Please check in with your attending DVM each week to determine status and plan.
- 4. Rehabilitation, the first key for success.** Most dogs adapt quickly to wearing an orthosis. Behavioral techniques can facilitate this. Also your dog will need to learn basic skills while wearing the device. These include: transitions (sitting, lying down, and getting up), stairs, getting into vehicles safely, navigating different types of surfaces (ground, carpet, hardwood floor, etc.). Finally, orthopedic injury leads to compensatory abnormal movement and associated muscle strain and weakness. The best way to ensure the highest level of success is to follow recommended rehabilitation schedules and techniques. Each patient's condition and abilities are unique, and as such, an individualized rehabilitation program is needed. OrthoPets strongly advises working with a certified canine rehabilitation professional. Your veterinarian can help find a certified canine rehabilitation professional (CCRT or CCRP) in your area. Home therapeutic exercise program will be designed to compliment in clinic rehabilitation sessions. Carefully following this plan will lead to greatest success and the best opportunity for a full and ACTIVE life.