Spondylosis Deformans

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BASIC INFORMATION

Description

The spinal column is composed of small bones called *vertebrae*. The spinal cord runs through the center of these bones, within the spinal canal. Between adjacent vertebrae are discs (intervertebral discs) that act as cushions and provide strength and stability to the spine. These cushions allow the vertebrae some flexibility and movement with respect to each other.

Spondylosis deformans is the presence of bony growth beneath and around the spinal column that forms solid bridges between adjacent vertebrae. The bone growth can cover the entire space between vertebrae, surrounding the intervertebral disc.

Causes

Spondylosis deformans is a common degenerative or age-related change of older dogs. The cause is unknown, but it may result from slight instability of the spinal column. The presence of spondylosis deformans may also indicate underlying intervertebral disc disease. (See the handout on **Intervertebral Disc Disease**.)

Clinical Signs

Spondylosis deformans alone does not usually cause neurologic signs or pain. Rarely, the bony growth can extend into the spinal canal and compress the nerves and spinal cord. If spinal cord compression occurs, pain, an uncoordinated gait, and weakness may occur.

Diagnostic Tests

Spondylosis deformans can be seen on x-rays of the spine. A magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) procedure is necessary if neurologic signs are present.

TREATMENT AND FOLLOW-UP

Treatment Options

Treatment is typically not necessary. Rarely, if spinal cord compression occurs, surgery is needed to remove the compressive bone.

Follow-up Care

Spondylosis deformans is usually an incidental finding and does not require long term follow-up.

Prognosis

Prognosis is good, because spondylosis deformans does not typically cause neurologic abnormalities or clinical signs.

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