Legg-Calve Perthes Disease in Dogs (Avascular Necrosis of the Femoral Head)

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Legg-Calve Perthes disease is a disorder of small breeds of dogs, such as poodles, and especially Yorkshire Terriers and West Highland White Terriers. With this condition, the puppy will grow normally until about three months of age. At this time, the ball (femoral head) of the hip joint begins to degenerate. It is believed that the blood supply to the femoral head decreases causing the bone to deteriorate and actually die. Similar conditions occur in humans. The end result is a malformed hip joint and secondary arthritis.

Researchers at Clemson University are trying to better understand what role genetics plays in the development of Legg-Calve Perthes Disease in toy and miniature poodles. If you have an affected dog and would be willing to have a blood sample drawn from your dog as part of this study, you can find more information at http://www.genome.clemson.edu/poodle.

What are the symptoms of Legg-Calve Perthes?

Even though the hip joint deterioration begins around three months of age, it is not until the puppy is six to ten months of age that he becomes lame. One or both hip joints may be involved. The dog will limp on the affected side(s).

What are the risks of Legg-Calve Perthes?

The hip joint will never be normal and some lameness will always be present. Arthritis will be the result in the affected joint.

What is the management of Legg-Calve Perthes?

Surgery to remove the diseased bone, i.e., the femoral head, is successful. The hip joint will not return to normal function, however, the destructive arthritic process will be greatly slowed. The secondary arthritis should be managed similarly to other forms of arthritis.

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