Caudal Cervical Vertebral Instability (Wobbler's Disease)

Caudal cervical vertebral instability or "Wobbler's" disease is a condition that can cause weakness, problems with coordination, and even full paralysis of the front and/or rear limbs. The most common breeds to be affected with Wobbler's disease are Great Danes and Doberman Pinschers, however, it has been seen in other breeds including Weimeriners and Dalmatians.

Wobbler's disease may consist of one or more of a variety of spinal abnormalities. Middle-aged to older Dobermans usually have instability of the bones of the vertebral column in the neck. This instability causes intermittent compression of the cervical spinal cord causing the signs of weakness, lack of coordination, and occasional paralysis. Treating this condition usually requires distraction and fusion of one or more of the segments affected cervical spine.

Contrary to the Doberman Pinschers, young Great Danes may have a congenital malformation of their cervical vertebral spine. This results in bone and/or soft tissue impingement of the spinal cord. Treating this condition usually requires a laminectomy procedure (removing impinging bone and soft tissue).

Wobbler dogs may require 8 weeks or longer to recover from surgery. Aggressive physical therapy during the recovery period is essential to the overall success of the procedure. Most dogs will improve following surgery, however other factors such as the amount of time that dogs have been showing signs of Wobbler's disease can affect the overall success rate.

The surgeons at WestVet frequently treat dogs with Wobbler's disease and many other neurosurgical problems. They can assess your dog for the signs of Wobbler's disease and discuss diagnostic and treatment options. WestVet's state of the art physical therapy center can help dogs suffering from Wobbler's disease and a variety of other neurologic conditions. If you think that your dog may have the signs of Wobbler's disease, contact your family veterinarian for an initial assessment.

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