

# **CDRM – Chronic Degenerative Radiculomyelopathy ALTERNATIVE VETERINARY MEDICINE CENTRE**

## **Information Sheet WS053/07**

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### **CDRM**

#### **What is it?**

The acronym stands for Chronic Degenerative Radiculo-Myelopathy (Chronic Degenerative Radiculomyelopathy). It is a degenerative nerve disease of possible [auto-immune](#) (autoimmune) origin. It mostly affects German Shepherd Dogs but there is, as yet, no confirmation of direct hereditary transmission of the disease. There is clearly, however, a hereditary susceptibility factor.

It is characterised by an apparent weakness and incoordination in the hind-quarters. The dog starts to drag his hind feet. There is swaying of the hind-quarters and sometimes falling, especially on turning quickly. It is progressive, following a variable and non-linear time scale. The condition is a demyelinating disease, primarily or initially of the proprioceptive (position sense) nerve fibres. This means that the dog is unaware of the position and posture of the hind limbs, hence the incoordination.

The signs that are shown must be distinguished from those of disco-spondylosis, arthritis, hip dysplasia etc. The diagnosis is usually presumptive, after clinical examination and investigations have ruled out the other possibilities. The noticeable disability, on examination, is unawareness of the hind foot being placed upside-down on the floor (absent 'placing reflex', allowing him to leave it in that abnormal position) or slowness in recovering the normal position (slow 'placing reflex'). A normal dog will not allow the foot to be placed upside down.

#### **How does it occur?**

We do not know how it occurs but we have suspicions that it may be of auto-immune origin. At the AVMC, we have seen a disturbing number of cases start just after a double [vaccination](#) course has been given, on account of lapsed annual boosters. We advise very strongly against this practice. There is no

scientific support for such a practice and, in our opinion, the dangers far outweigh the benefits.

### **Are there preventive measures to take?**

It is wise to provide a fresh, natural, varied [diet](#), as free from chemicals as possible and to avoid over-vaccination. We are anxious about many anti-flea chemicals, since apparently neurotoxic effects are being seen from some of these. Apart from this, we do not know what else to advise for prevention.

### **Is it responsive to treatment?**

There is no conventional treatment for this disease. The usual advice is to await the time when the situation becomes untenable.

Since we have been asked, again and again, to try for such patients, we have seen some successes, mostly of limited scale, in a surprising proportion of cases. A few dogs have shown remarkable improvements. The treatment we use is an integrated programme of [acupuncture](#), [homeopathy](#), [nutrition](#) and [LASER](#).

We have seen better results in those dogs that are over 9 years of age at time of onset of signs. We have no explanation for this apparent paradox.



*Our first successful case –  
diagnosed at 10 y.o. and lived to  
14 y.o.*

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