

Medial patella luxation (MPL) refers to a condition where a pet's kneecap (patella) moves out of its normal position, popping in the direction of the inside of the knee. The condition can be caused by a variety of genetic and environmental factors as well as trauma to the area. It is fairly common in pets, especially small dogs, and can lead to discomfort and loss of movement in the affected leg or legs.

Symptoms

Breeds that are especially at risk for medial patella luxation include Maltese, Poodles, Yorkshire Terriers, and other small or toy breed dogs. Larger dogs and cats may also experience MPL, though the cause in those cases tend to be more from trauma. The age of onset for symptoms is often in the first 6-12 months of life, though mild cases may not be detected until much later.

- Sudden skips/limping for a few steps before regaining use of a limb
- Longer periods of lameness that grow in length and severity
- Eventual continuous lameness
- In puppies, they may present with a bow-legged appearance
- Larger dogs may look knock-kneed

Diagnosis

We generally use physical examination and, in some cases, x-ray imaging to diagnose medial patella luxations. We will give the MPL a score on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being the most mild form and 4 the most severe. Grade 1 means that your pet's patella generally stays in place, though it can shift when manipulated during the exam. Grade 2 means that the luxation can occur spontaneously. Grade 3 means that the patella spends more time out of place than in. Grade 4 means that the patella is permanently out of place and will require surgical intervention. While lower grade MPLs generally do not require immediate surgery, we may suggest it to prevent further degradation of the joint and the formation of arthritis in the future.

Treatment

It is not uncommon to see medial patella luxation in combination with other diseases or injuries to the knee, including cranial cruciate ligament disease and hip dysplasia. Treatment for MPL may need to happen in combination with other procedures to correct the joint. We will reconstruct the soft tissues surrounding the patella so that it no longer gets pulled into the inner side of the knee and deepen the femoral groove to allow the kneecap to sit more deeply in its correct home. We may also need to correct abnormalities in misshaped femurs if this is causing the kneecap to luxate.

Conclusion

Please keep in mind that early diagnosis and swift treatment, especially in cases of trauma-induced severe media patella luxation is critical for successful treatment. We will discuss all the available options for your pet and potential outcomes to find the best fit for your companion.