3 C’S OF COLD AND COMPRESSION FOR CANINES

by Dr. Erica Shoults, DVM

Icing an area after tissue trauma is one of the longest standing forms of physical therapy available to canine patients. In addition to icing, combining it with compression helps take cryotherapy to a whole other level of efficacy. Let’s take a look at what icing with compression can do for your patients.

**COLD**

Applying cold to a dog’s skin for approximately 20 minutes reduces blood flow, thus decreasing tissue damage and increasing analgesia. It is most effective within the first 72 hours after injury, surgery or trauma but can also be utilized with chronic issues such as arthritis. Some methods of delivery for cryotherapy include ice packs, cold baths and frozen gel packs.

**COMPRESSION**

Compressing the tissue around an area that has been injured aids in decreasing the amount of edema that can accumulate. Minimizing the swelling will make the patient more comfortable, thus becoming more mobile earlier for a speedier recovery. The types of compression that are available are static compression, utilizing bandages or wraps that stay in place, and/or intermittent pneumatic compression, utilizing wraps that cycle between inflating and deflating for a period of time.

**COMBINATION**

Combining the efforts of compression with icing allows the pet to get the best of both worlds, especially with dynamic compression. The alternating expanding and contracting motion of the wrap creates a massage effect for the area being treated in addition to helping concentrate the cold around the entire area. And, an added benefit of the cold compression blend is that oxygenated blood gets pumped into the injured tissue to enhance healing as well. This method works by attaching a wrap, with icing capabilities, to a pump that will rotate between inflating and deflating over time.

The effects of icing and compression provide excellent benefits in regards to pain management and range of motion post-surgery or tissue damage. Decrease pain in your patients, get them exercising faster and better while healing their injuries in a shorter amount of time when combining cryotherapy with compressive therapy for the best outcomes possible.

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