Orthopedic Bracing: Why and How to Implement in Your Practice

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In 2009, the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association estimated that over 1 million CCL surgeries were being performed annually. Additionally, other figures suggest that more than 60% of dogs who have one torn CCL will tear the other within 2 years.

By those numbers, we can estimate that about 1-in-78 dogs will undergo CCL surgery, a large figure in its own right, but considering the average cost of a TPLO surgery is between $3,500 - $5,0001 we can also assume that the vast majority of patients who need surgery are not receiving it. Anecdotally, we hear countless stories from clinics who see otherwise healthy patients resigned to limp painfully for the rest of their lives, or even pet owners who consider ethical euthanasia.

As a host of influences affect the current industry, we see pet owners and clinics alike demand more alternative treatment options, and the data seems to corroborate those trends. For example, the global veterinary pain management market is projected, at a CAGR of 8%, to hit $1.66 billion by 2023, and is lead primarily by pain management devices (non-pharmaceutical), like the KVP Cura Patch™, a Pulsed Electromagnetic Frequency device.

Understanding Bracing

Ligament ruptures aren’t the only maladies that orthopedic bracing addresses either. Animal mobility can be affected in many ways, from physical trauma and injury, neurological deficiencies, or sometimes simply old age. Orthopedic braces are musculoskeletal devices used to support the affected joint in healthy, anatomically correct movements, dispersing body weight to help prevent further injury. Although the CCL might be the most common ligament ruptures in canines, the carpal, hock, and elbows are all problem areas as well.

Orthopedic bracing, aside from reducing risk of further injury, provides greater confidence in mobility, reduces fatigue, and helps with pain and swelling. In many cases, overcompensating for an injury can lead to other issues, and proper bracing can help prevent them. According to Evelyn Orenbuch, DVM, “One thought is that just by increasing proprioceptive input to the leg, the patient will walk better… Ultimately, strengthening is the most important aspect of treating the non-surgical cruciate case. Make the stifle feel more stable and comfortable is strengthening the soft tissues around that stifle and giving the body the time to build scar tissue while hopefully not losing too much range of motion.”

Bracing Solutions

There are a wide range of orthopedic bracing solutions available, from soft braces to hard, fully customized hinged braces. Soft braces, like those made by Balto® and carried by KVP, are a great introductory product and price. While they brace against full range of normal motion, in cases like the stifle they will limit the potential of detrimental drawer movements. If full range of motion is needed, or a solution to last the full life of the patient, a customized brace from KVP Custom Orthotics is the best solution. These products work optimally when used with surgery, but when surgery is cost prohibitive or the candidate isn’t ideal, these are great alternatives.

Additionally, products like these perform very well as direct-to-customer models. Why? Because pet owners who cannot seem to stomach the cost of surgery, nor the thought of their pet in pain, seek out these solutions on their own. With an average price tag of $750 per CCL custom brace, there’s a lot of opportunity left on the table when clinics do not have something to offer as an alternative.

As KVP Custom Orthotics brings those revenue streams into your clinic, it’s also worth noting that KVP CO is the only custom orthotics company to work exclusively with veterinarians and diagnosis – providing a service-based solution to meet customer demand, with none of the hassle.