



Canine SI Pain

When dealing with a dog with SI pain there are many factors to consider. The dogs SI joint is an integral part of your dogs' ability to move. The Sacral Iliac joint (SI) is where the pelvis and the spine (sacrum) come together or articulate. The SI joint is the place that the body takes the power created from the hind end and sends it through the spine. Assessment of the pelvis balance and range of motion will determine what is happening within the joint and the pelvis itself. This will be a key to healing any asymmetry.

SI joint is supposed to be very stable and offer very little movement. Due to the work we do with our modern dogs, this joint takes a lot more torque than it may have been intended to tolerate. Pain in this area will reduce the range of motion of the back, hips and hind legs. A dog with SI pain may not be overtly lame but may seem 'just not right'; the dog may not have the same spring in its step, may find exercises it once found easy to be more difficult, or simply may not have the same verve for work. When a dog is protecting this area of its body, they tend to lock in the lumbar and upper Gluteal muscles, thereby making back pain increase and force the range of motion to decrease. Veterinary assistance may be needed to settle this area down and help us reduce pain. This will allow the dog to work correctly enough to start to build with specific exercises and stretches. Your dog's health care team should determine the level of difficulty of these exercises. Once we are positive this problem is correctly diagnosed and we can categorize the severity of the problem, the following soft tissue therapy exercises can be done.

Severe soreness: This dog is in a lot of pain and may have pathology that has been or needs to be diagnosed by the Vet. Exercise is taken down to the very basics. Often 2-4 weeks of hand-walking and trotting are required to settle the area down and allow the tissue some time to repair. During this time your dogs' health care team should determine how much work the dog is allowed to do. Once the acute level

of soreness is alleviated then the strength and range of motion building program can begin. This can be a long process however; the time invested will be well worth it.

Moderate soreness: This dog is functionally sound and is in full work but is showing outward signs of pain in the area. The dog physically drops when the area palpated, is resentful to do range of motion in the joint and is showing physical imbalance in the spine where the pelvis seems to have risen up and possible lumbar vertebrae hills and valley are visible. The dog is not able to complete all tasks asked of it and is struggling to hold collection and coil the loins. Hand-walking to warm and cool the dog up for 10-12 minutes will be a minimum. If you find the dog is slow to warm up add in In-hand trotting (no lunge circles) 5-7 minutes. Then start on the exercises therapy below.

Low-grade soreness and injury prevention: This dog just has some stiffness or mild soreness in the area. This may also be a dog that you feel is conformationally challenged in this area and you want to work on increasing the strength. All of the below exercise therapy will be appropriate

Tips for working with SI pain:

- Have your dogs postural balance checked.
- Check harness or anything that affects the dogs back and hip.
- Application of heat (can be used before and after work). Use 12-18 min of heat.
- Therapy products that increase circulation.
- Light to moderate massage using your hand or if the dog allows it, a massage mitt to increase circulation and stimulate nerves.
- Use the Hip Rock, Quick Tail Pull, Stifle Isometric and Tummy Lift technique to warm the tissue and mobilize the joints before work.
- Use hind leg dangle bracelets to stimulate lift and reach.

Exercises:

Ensure your dog has an adequate warm

up and cool down; muscles need that circulation to function at their best. Encourage the hind leg to move during this time and work through full range of motion.

Inhand work

- Poles
- Cavaletti
- Turn on haunches
- Labyrinth
- Hill work; up hills, down hills, and transverse (across) hills, gait transitions on the hill going up or down the grade.
- Backing: both straight line and circles
- Zig Zag laterals
- Figure 8 or small diameter serpentines
- Flexion work; True flexion, Counter flexion, Serpentines, Spirals, Figure 8's
- Lateral work; leg yield, Haunches in and out, hip yield, half pass, side pass.
- Transitions; both up and down as well as within the gait, gait transitions in a straight line and on a circle.
- Backing; in a straight line and on a circle. Long lines of backing will really target range of motion 25-40 steps.
- Roll Backs, Pirouette work in the walk or canter. Only if dog is at strength building level.
- Gymnastic jumping

Range of Motion Exercises

- Should be performed before and after work, also safe for the dog that has been taken out of work altogether.
- Hip Rock
 - Quick Tail Pull
 - Stifle Isometric
 - Rib Rock
 - Foreleg Up Push Back
 - Tummy Lift

Stretches

- Tummy Lift
- Stifle Isometric
- Hip Rock
- Rib Rock
- Hamstring Stretch
- Tail Stretch
- Cookie Stretches

****NOTE: Therapy is not a replacement for Veterinary Care.****





Canine SI Pain Continued

Do you need to get on the fast track to getting your dogs' fitness InHand?

I know how busy life can be, and I know we all want to do the best we can for our dog. If you don't have the time to do the complete program listed above with your dog, it's better to do a little work rather than skip it all. Choose one exercise a day from the exercises, range of motion and stretch list above. Even if you rotate through the above list of work on a daily basis, you will be making a positive change and helping your animal. Choose to do something every day, no matter how small will be a step forward in your dogs' wellness program. When we work our dog in the peak and valley type of program with a ton of work for a few days and then nothing for a time, we may actually be doing more harm than good.

Steady work towards your dogs' postural goals will bring the results you want, and the more time you can devote the quicker you will get there, however slow and steady will win the race as well.

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