

## Greys Matter

# OSTEOARTHRITIS

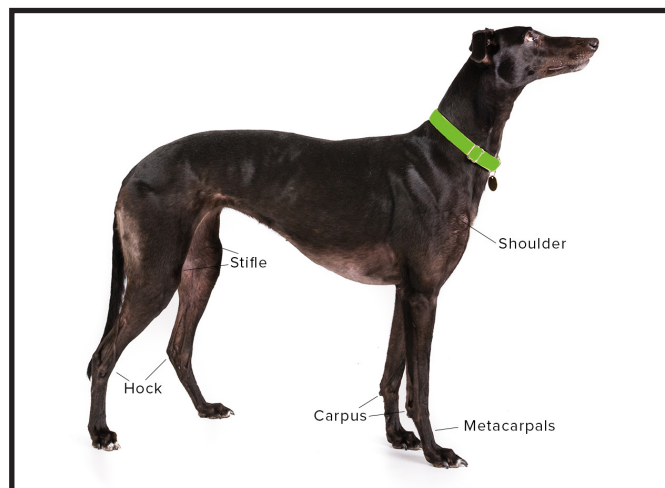
## What is osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a joint disease where the joint cartilage and the underlying bone are damaged and become inflamed. It can be a primary or secondary problem. Primary OA is caused by wear and tear on joints that naturally occurs during ageing. Secondary OA is caused by things other than wear and tear such as infection and trauma. Because of the rate of training and racing injuries, Greys are susceptible to secondary OA.

The joints most commonly affected are:

- Hocks (equivalent to our ankles)
- Stifles (knees)
- Shoulders
- Carpi (equivalent to our wrists)
- Metacarpals (equivalent to hand bones)

Greys don't tend to get hip OA as commonly as other breeds. When hip OA does occur in Greyhounds, it's usually related to genetics (eg hip dysplasia) or obesity.



## What are the symptoms of osteoarthritis?

OA causes joint pain, so the main sign is limping/lameness. The lameness is often worse when first getting up and then appears to improve when up and around. It can be quite difficult to spot limping if it occurs 'bilaterally' (ie on both sides) – if your Grey has OA in both carpi then you might not see favouring of one leg, instead you might notice a stiff gait.

Other signs of OA include:

- having difficulty getting up after lying down
- taking a long time to lay down
- not wanting to get in/out of the car or go up/down stairs
- not being able to get comfortable – shifting position a lot while lying down
- licking joints
- less playfulness
- reluctance to exercise

These signs and symptoms can occur in other conditions too, so it's important to have your Grey assessed by a vet to ensure the correct diagnosis is made. Sometimes X-rays will be recommended as these can help

## How is osteoarthritis treated?

There are several different treatments for OA – but there is no cure. Often the most effective relief comes from a combination of treatments.

Treatments include:

- weight management (if necessary)
- daily, low-impact exercise (eg walking, swimming)
- joint protection treatments – these decrease the breakdown of cartilage (and/or provide building blocks for regeneration) as well as providing some anti-inflammatory effects. Some also promote joint fluid production. The main agents are: polysulphated glycosaminoglycan (PSGAG), glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate
- omega 3 fatty acids (eg fish oils) – these may reduce production of inflammatory chemicals
- non steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDS) – there are several different types available but all do the same thing – reduce pain by reducing inflammation. We need to be careful with these in dog with kidney or liver disease
- other pain relieving medication – examples include tramadol, gabapentin and amantadine
- acupuncture
- injections into joints – steroids have been used in the past but now stem cells and platelet rich plasma injections are being used more frequently

Surgery is rarely used to treat animal arthritis. The role of surgery is usually in treating injuries or conditions that lead to arthritis.

There's no 'one size fits all' for OA treatment. Each dog needs a tailored treatment plan with regular revisions.