Center for Animal Referral
CARES
and Emergency Services

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High-Tech Knee Surgery Gives Dogs with Bad Knees a 2nd Chance at Mobility

Cruciate-Ligament Repairs are the Most Common Knee Procedures Done at CARES in Langhorne

Langhorne, PA – Serious knee injuries are very often a painful reality for active, large breed and overweight dogs. Unfortunately for dogs, the design of their knees makes them very susceptible to injure a ligament called the cranial cruciate. A cranial cruciate injury is a lot like tearing an ACL (Anterior Cruciate Ligament), in humans. In fact, dogs are so prone to this injury, that **in the U.S. Each year, the number of dogs undergoing knee repair is approximately five times higher than the number of humans undergoing similar procedures**, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Board Certified Veterinary Surgeon Dr. David A. Puerto, DVM, DACVS, of the Center for Animal Referral and Emergency Services (CARES), in Langhorne, says, "The best news for pet parents is, combining a minimally invasive surgery, done arthroscopically (a fiberoptic camera inserted into a tiny incision), with a cruciate repair surgery, such as tibial plateau leveling osteotomy (TPLO), can give dogs with bad knees a second chance at real mobility." Cruciate-ligament repairs are the most common surgical procedures Dr. Puerto sees at CARES.

Most pet owners may not have ever heard of TPLO Surgery, or Tibial Plateau Leveling Osteotomy. In a nutshell, it's a procedure used to treat rupture of the cranial cruciate ligament in a dog's knee. In layman's terms, the cruciates are the ligaments that stabilize the joint between the upper leg and the lower leg and, if healthy, prevent forward and backward sliding of the femur on the tibia bone. If this ligament ruptures, a very painful and crippling lameness is what follows.

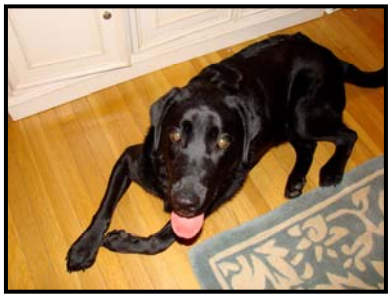
Above: Actual Patient X-Ray of "Bear" Ellis (Read Below for Bear's Success Story)

Signs a Dog is Suffering from Cruciate Ligament Tear:

- **Holding their leg off of the ground or not placing any weight on the leg**
- **Signs of discomfort and disuse of the leg**
- **Appears to be "searching" for the floor with their foot**
- **Intermittent lameness, worsened by exercise**

"The risk of cruciate ligament tear increases if your dog is overweight, large, older, is used to active, sporting, or working canine lifestyles, or has medical conditions that weaken the ligaments," says Dr. Puerto. "Diagnosing ligament damage should only be done though a physical evaluation by a qualified veterinarian or veterinary surgeon. During this exam, the dog's knee joint will be manipulated and tested for stability." According to Dr. Puerto, "Combining a minimally invasive arthroscopic treatment of the injured joint with TPLO allows patients to return to normal function very quickly and with less post-operative pain, reduced stress and infections and with shorter hospital stays. It's very rewarding for us to see our patients regaining the quality of life they used to know."

"Bear" Ellis, a TPLO Success Story



Bear is a two-and-a-half year old black Labrador Retriever. His owners, Scott and Erin Ellis recalled noticing he was having problems with his legs, although they didn't know why. "First, he appeared to be stiff in his right leg. Then, after a while, we noticed he had trouble walking altogether, especially after exercising. It was hard for us to watch," remembers Scott. "From there, things got progressively worse. Bear wouldn't place his weight on his right-back leg. He would just hold it up in the air, sort-of off of the floor."

Above: Bear Ellis BEFORE TPLO

Bear's general veterinarian referred him to Dr. Puerto at CARES, where he received TPLO. "We were amazed." says Scott. "On, literally, the day we got home from the hospital, he wanted to walk and appeared to try to do so with no difficultly. After the procedure, Bear was kept in confinement for about three months with no outdoor exercises, except to use the restroom. Although, It didn't take long for him to show signs of wanting to become more vigorous, wanting exercise. Bear ultimately had both his knees repaired with TPLO and he's now fully recovered and going on 45 min walks with ease."

Above: Bear Ellis AFTER TPLO

About Dr. David A. Puerto, DVM, DACVS

Dr. Puerto earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Dartmouth College in 1989. He then attended Cornell University and obtained a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) in 1993. He completed a Rotating Small Animal Internship at the University of Pennsylvania from 1996 to 1997 and a PennHIP Research Fellowship there, from 1997 to 1998. Also at the University of Pennsylvania, he finished a Small Animal Surgical Residency from 1998 to 2001. Dr. Puerto is a member of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, the Veterinary Orthopedic Society, the Society of Veterinary Soft Tissue Surgeons, the American Veterinary Medical Association, the Pennsylvania Veterinarian Medical Association, and is a Member of the Advisory Board for Veterinary Technical Program for Manor College. Dr. Puerto is Board Certified in his field and a published author of a number of veterinary studies and publications. Dr. Puerto has been on the full time staff of CARES since 2004.

The media is invited to visit Dr. Puerto, at CARES, to experience the diagnosis and treatment of actual Cruciate Ligament repair cases with arthroscopic assisted TPLO. Media inquiries please contact Julie Robbins (813) 412-3342 or Julie@FetchingCommunications.com.

About CARES:

CARES is a full service specialty referral, emergency and critical care veterinary hospital. Specialty cases are seen by referral from the primary care veterinarian. Specialty services include: Cardiology, Clinical Pathology, Internal Medicine, Oncology, Ophthalmology, Radiology, Surgery and Client Support. The hospital also offers 24 hour emergency care. CARES has been voted 2008 Neighbors' Choice Award Winner for Best Veterinarian/Animal Hospital in Bucks County. For more information, visit www.vetcares.com