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**ANTERIOR CRUCIATE LIGAMENT RUPTURE
(ACL)**

1) The cruciate ligaments, both anterior and posterior, and their associated joint cartilage, called menisci, are structures that provide stability during motion of the knee joint. When any of these structures are damaged alone or in various combinations, the resulting instability leads to pain and progressive degenerative changes (arthritis) in the joint. Progressive simply means the longer the duration of the injury the more severe the damage to the joint.

2) The diagnosis of ACL rupture is made by feeling laxity in the joint called anterior drawer. When this sign is present the diagnosis is made, however, the sign may not be present due to partial ligament damage, swelling or other factors. On occasion, sedation with x-rays and palpation of the joint may aid in the diagnosis. It should be noted that 50% of dogs with a torn ACL, will damage the ACL in the opposing leg some time in the future.

3) The goal of surgery is to increase joint stability and therefore decrease the associated joint degeneration and joint pain. A favorable response to the procedure is expected in 80-85% of cases. The procedure involves surgically opening the joint, removing the damaged tissue and affecting a repair by placing permanent stabilizing sutures. Postoperatively patients are sent home with medication to control pain and antibiotics to prevent infection.

4) In dogs with this type of injury the nutraceuticals (vitamin-like supplements) that are recommended to aid joint health are Cosequin and Omega-3 fatty acid supplements. Cosequin contains chondroitin sulfate, glucosamine and manganese which are the building blocks for a healthy joint. Omega-3 fatty acids have anti-inflammatory properties that are more gentle on the body than prescription anti-inflammatory agents especially when used for extended periods of time.