

Will my pet need an operation?

In most cases a slipped disc should be considered to be a surgical disease except where:

- This is the first time the animal has had back pain
- The animal has had a medical condition that contraindicates general anaesthesia.

Or if the animal has minimal spinal cord compression and it is suspected that spinal bruising is responsible for most of the signs.

Non-surgical treatment consists of strict rest, in a cage or room, (depending on the size of your pet), for at least 4 weeks and treatment with drugs that will reduce inflammation and pain. Your vet will want to see your pet regularly to ensure that they are not getting worse without surgery.

If you suspect that your dog may be affected by any of the symptoms described in this leaflet, please consult your own vet immediately for advice.

Information obtained from :

Vetstream—widely used Vet Anatomy Website

ALWAYS CONTACT YOUR OWN VETERINARY SURGEON FOR
ADVICE ABOUT THE HEALTH OF YOUR BASSET HOUND

Information Leaflet Compiled and Supplied by

The Basset Hound Health Group

To keep up to date with all matters affecting Basset Hounds in your area, why not join your local Breed Club?
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The Basset Hound Disc Disease

This information Leaflet has been produced to explain a little about Disc Disease

Intervertebral Disc (Slipped Disc)

The spine is the name given to the collection of bones (vertebrae) inside which the spinal cord is contained. The spinal cord is made of cables of nerves (like wires running in an electrical cable), linking the brain to the local nerves that control the movement of limbs and other functions (the peripheral nervous system). The intervertebral disc is a spongy, doughnut shaped pad in the main joint between the vertebrae. The disc lies just underneath the spinal cord in dogs and cats. Each disc has a liquid centre (nucleus pulposus) and a tougher outer fibrous layer (annulus fibrosus). The discs form a bridge between two neighbouring vertebrae and act as a cushion, giving strength and flexibility to the spine.

Why does a disc slip?

A slipped disc can happen in 2 ways:

- 1: Rupture of a healthy disc can be caused by trauma (such as a road traffic accident, or a fall from height) with tearing of the annulus fibrosus.
- 2: Degeneration of the disc is a result of a premature aging process. This causes progressive thickening of the dorsal (top) part of the annulus fibrosus which presses up on the spinal cord (disc protrusion). Disc degeneration can also result in the regions of the spine which are particularly exposed to physical stress (lower neck, mid back and lower back). Degeneration can also result in stiffening of the disc as the semi liquid centre becomes dry and loses its cushioning properties. If this happens the annulus fibrosus can tear allowing the, now stiff, nucleus to bulge out and put pressure on the spinal cord (disc extrusion), as seen in diagram 2—Herniated Disc

How would I know if my pet has a slipped disc?

Spinal pain is the most common sign of disc disease. If your pet has spinal pain they may adopt abnormal posture, low head carriage, rounding the back, be reluctant to move or exercise, cry when moving around. A slipped disc can put pressure on the spinal cord, this damages the nerves. If the disc slips suddenly there may also be bleeding into the spine which may put even more pressure on the nerves. This can cause any or all of the following signs: loss of coordination, weakness, paralysis, lameness, faecal or urinary incontinence, loss of sensation in the legs.

How will my vet know what is wrong with my pet?

If your pet has any signs of back problems or lameness your vet will want to perform a full neurological examination.

Diagnosis of a slipped disc is rarely possible using standard x-rays alone. A standard x-ray can only show the bones of the vertebrae and not the joints between them (the discs) or the spinal cord running inside them. Sometimes changes can be seen on conventional x-rays suggesting disc degeneration without the animal showing any signs. A definite diagnosis of a slipped disc can be made using either myelography (x-rays taken after the injection of dye around the spinal cord), CT (COMPUTING TOMOGRAPHY) or MRI (MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING). These special tests help to confirm if there is a slipped disc, where it is and will also show up other causes of spinal pain or paralysis if they are present.

Diagram of Healthy Vertebrae & Spinal Cord

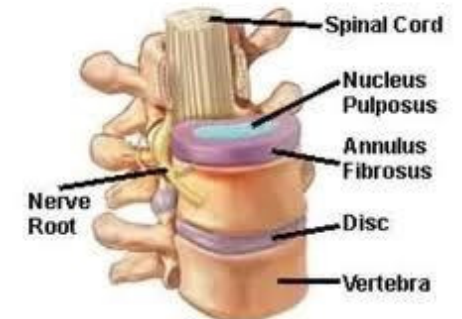


Diagram of Herniated Disc Showing the nucleus to bulge out and putting pressure on the spinal cord

