

INTERVERTEBRAL DISC DISEASE (IVDD)

Recognising and Managing Spinal Disease in Dogs



Intervertebral Disc Disease (IVDD) occurs when one or more of a dog's intervertebral discs undergo degenerative change.

Degeneration can happen from an early age, and as the dog ages these degenerate discs can then bulge or rupture causing damage to the spinal cord and nerves.

If left untreated dogs can have continued pain and permanent nerve damage, including paralysis. A small percentage of dogs damage the spinal cord so severely that they never regain the ability to walk or urinate.

1 WHAT IS IVDD?

Intervertebral discs act as shock absorbers between the bones of the spine.

When a disc degenerates, it can:

- ✓ Bulge into the spinal canal
- ✓ Rupture suddenly
- ✓ Compress the spinal cord and nerves
- ✓ Cause pain and neurological dysfunction



DID YOU KNOW?

IVDD is one of the most common causes of spinal pain and paralysis in dogs.

2 WHY IS IVDD SERIOUS?

Pressure on the spinal cord can affect your dog's ability to:

- ✓ Walk normally
- ✓ Maintain balance
- ✓ Feel their limbs
- ✓ Control their bladder and bowel function

Prompt veterinary attention gives the best chance of recovery.



3 WHICH DOGS ARE AT RISK?

Although IVDD can occur in any breed, it is commonly seen in:

- ✓ Dachshunds
- ✓ French Bulldogs
- ✓ Cavoodles
- ✓ Jack Russell Terriers
- ✓ Corgis

Dogs with longer backs and shorter legs may be at increased risk.



4 COMMON SIGNS OF IVDD

Signs may include:

- ✓ Reluctance to jump
- ✓ Hiding or behavioural changes
- ✓ Intermittent or persistent pain
- ✓ Arched or hunched back
- ✓ Wobbliness or weakness
- ✓ Lameness in one or both hind legs



If you notice these signs, arrange a veterinary examination as soon as possible.

5 WHEN IS IT AN EMERGENCY?

Seek immediate veterinary attention if your dog develops:

- ✓ Inability to walk
- ✓ Sudden paralysis
- ✓ Inability to urinate
- ✓ Loss of bladder control
- ✓ Weakness in the front limbs
- ✓ Severe neck pain or reluctance to move



These signs may indicate significant spinal cord compression.

6 HOW IS IVDD DIAGNOSED?

Diagnosis may involve:

- ✓ Physical examination
- ✓ Neurological assessment
- ✓ Radiographs (X-rays)
- ✓ CT scanning
- ✓ MRI imaging

Advanced imaging helps determine the location and severity of spinal cord compression.



DID YOU KNOW?

MRI is considered the gold standard for diagnosing IVDD.

7 TREATMENT OPTIONS

Treatment depends on the severity of the condition and may include:

- ✓ Strict cage or crate rest
- ✓ Pain relief medication
- ✓ Anti-inflammatory treatment
- ✓ Physiotherapy
- ✓ Surgical intervention



Some dogs require referral for specialist surgery.

8 REDUCE THE RISK

You can help reduce your dog's risk of IVDD by:

- ✓ Maintaining a healthy body weight
- ✓ Using care when lifting or carrying your dog
- ✓ Preventing jumping from furniture and vehicles
- ✓ Using ramps or stairs where possible
- ✓ Limiting access to crawl spaces under furniture
- ✓ Reducing slipping on smooth floors
- ✓ Discussing deslipping timing with your veterinarian



9 KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ IVDD is a common spinal condition in dogs
- ✓ Early diagnosis improves outcomes
- ✓ Sudden weakness or paralysis is an emergency
- ✓ Maintaining a healthy weight helps reduce risk
- ✓ Many dogs recover well with appropriate treatment
- ✓ Surgery may be required in severe cases



If you are concerned your dog may be showing signs of IVDD, contact Forbes Veterinary Clinic for advice and assessment.