

# *Paws, Claws & Wings*

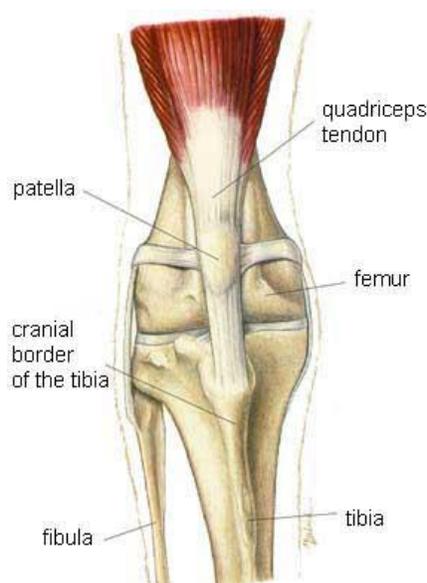
*Physical and Behavioral Rehabilitation for Animals*

## **Patellar Luxation (Dislocated Kneecap)**

Patellar luxation is a problem commonly seen in dogs and occasionally seen in cats. The patella (knee cap) is a "floating" bone associated with the knee or stifle joint. Patellar luxation most commonly occurs in small breed dogs such as Poodles, Pomeranians and Chihuahuas but can also occur in larger breeds. Most patellar luxations involve displacement of the patella to the inside of the knee, which is referred to as a medial patellar luxation. In large dogs the luxation or displacement is often to the outside or lateral. Medial patellar luxations are associated with a "bow-legged" confirmation while lateral patellar luxations are associated with a "knock-kneed" posture.

### **Common clinical signs:**

Typical dogs with patellar luxation will have intermittent non-weight bearing lameness. They will be completely normal most of the time but completely non-weight bearing intermittently. When the patella luxates an animal will pull the limb off the ground. When it returns to its normal position in the trochlear groove, the animal will place normal weight on the affected limb. Owners will occasionally describe a popping noise in their pet's knee or will be able to feel the instability in the knee cap when touching their pet's back legs. Most animals do not seem especially painful when the patella luxates, they simply not use the limb with the patella outside of its normal position.





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- Patellar luxation involves displacement of the knee-cap from its normal position towards the inside of the knee with medial luxation and toward the outside with lateral luxation.
- Small dogs are affected approximately 10 times more often than large breed dogs and females are affected 1.5 times more frequently than males.
- Patellar luxations are divided into medial (inside) and lateral (outside) categories with four degrees of severity. Grade one luxations are the least severe and grade four luxations are the most severe.
- Dogs with patellar luxation most often have an intermittent non-weight bearing lameness that does not generally appear painful.
- A definitive diagnosis is made upon physical examination, most often with the aide of radiographs of the entire limb.
- Surgery is recommended for animals with grade 2, 3 or 4 luxation and a history of lameness.
- Surgery generally involves deepening the distal femoral groove, movement of the tibial tuberosity and manipulation of the tissues that surround the kneecap.
- The prognosis for a complete resolution of lameness following surgery with grade 1, 2 or 3 luxation is excellent. The prognosis for return to normal or near normal function with grade 4 is less predictable.
- Activity restriction following surgery is required for 8 weeks to promote the best chance of a return to normal function and avoid potential surgical complications.

## **Physical therapy:**

Surgery is the ideal choice for treating patellar luxations. Physical therapy can be started immediately after the surgery has been performed and will initially consist of passive range of motion (PROM), massage and stretching, this will ensure that the pet loses as little motion in the knee joint as possible. Once the veterinarian has ascertained that the patella repair is stable, hydrotherapy can be started to assist with strengthening of the muscles, ligaments and tendons to help hold the patella in place.

If surgery is not elected, physical therapy (including hydrotherapy) can be used to help treat Grade 1, 2 and 3 patellar luxations. This involves strengthening of the muscles, ligaments and tendons to help hold the patella in place. Physical therapy can also assist with any pain the pet is feeling and can help correct the stance.