Intervertebral Disk Disease (IVDD) in Chondrodystrophoid (dwarf) Dogs

NANNYKID FARM CORGIS·TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2020·

Dachshund, Beagle, Shih Tzu, Lhasa Apso, and Pekingese are Chondrodystrophoid (dwarfed) breeds of dogs most commonly affected by IVDD. Other chondrodystrophic breeds that may be affected by IVDD include Corgis (Cardigan and Pembroke), Cocker Spaniel, Bassett Hounds, French Bulldogs, and Poodle. This list is probably not all inclusive of the Chondrodystrophoid breeds at risk of IVDD.

Nonchondrodystrophic breeds that are commonly affected by IVDD include German Shepherd, Labrador Retriever and Doberman Pinscher. This list is probably not all inclusive of Nonchondrodystrophic breeds affected by IVDD.

Obese dogs of predisposed breeds are at increased risk of suffering from IVDD. IVDD symptoms appear when the gel-like substance between the discs of the spine hardens reducing spine flexibility. When the discs are forced to compress or stretch, the disc can rupture and put pressure on the spinal cord and surrounding nerves. This is also commonly referred to as a “slipped” disc.

Signs of an injured disc that could develop into a ruptured/slipped disc include limping, reluctance to walk, or reluctance to do other activities the dog normally enjoys. A dog with these symptoms should be rested with little to no exercise and on-leash potty breaks for 1-2 days. If the limp or reluctance is anything more than mild when it comes to doing normal activities continues, the dog should be seen by a veterinarian right away. If even mild symptoms continue for more than 2 days, contact your veterinarian for an appointment without delay. The earlier symptoms are diagnosed and treated, the better. If symptoms are ignored, they could progress into an inability to walk, an inability to stand, and then paralysis.

ALL Corgis are at risk for IVDD, specifically Type 1 IVDD where the disc can rupture simply because they are a Chondrodystrophoid (dwarf) breed. Their risk increases exponentially with extra weight as well as lack of exercise to help keep their muscles strong. An overweight and unfit Corgi with little supporting muscle is more at risk than a well-conditioned Corgi. Just like people, it takes well-conditioned muscles to support the back and help prevent back problems, pain, and injury.
An overweight Corgi is more than a cosmetic problem, it is a health problem that can lead to IVDD. The extra weight pulls on their spine and aggravates their joints. Other factors that can be controlled to help prevent IVDD are; not allowing the dog to jump on and off furniture including beds, or in and out of vehicles as this can cause twisting and pinching of their vertebrae. Stairs can also be a risk factor, but one that can be harder to avoid.

Since we ourselves have a two-story house, we have limited their access to the stairway with the use of a pet gate. The way we see it, the more in a series of stairs they have access to the more risk of the stairs causing a problem. Fewer stairs lessens the risk. There’s no way in and out our house without going up or down one or two steps, which we consider an unavoidable and acceptable risk. At our front door the steps wrap around the deck and it is the doorway used most for our Corgis to come and go through. The wider length of the stairs allows them to go and down up the stairs at an angle as opposed to going up “straight on” where their body is at a 90 degree to each step as the go up and down. Going up and down stairs at an angle relieves some stress on their back as well as their legs. Every little bit helps. Of course, there are times when they are “flying Corgis” and choose to not use the stairs at all. Despite the risk of IVDD, Corgis are very athletic!

The key is to *reduce the risk of IVDD* as much as possible while allowing a Corgi to be a dog.

We strive for Corgis that are athletic and agile, take precautions that protect their backs, and from there allow them to enjoy being dogs. We are also reassured we’re being good stewards with the fact that our dogs do not carry the gene mutation that causes a dog to be more likely to have high food motivation, which can cause them to eat excessively, have higher body fat percentage, and be more prone to obesity. A person would probably never guess they don’t have a “high food motivation” if you watch them around food, but excess weight has never been a problem and we monitor it closely.

Knowing our Corgis genes for food motivation and how weight can affect IVDD is another reason we believe in genetic testing. It insures we have done our best to provide healthy Corgis in the face of the breed having the genes for Type 1 IVDD. With this knowledge, the families that have a NannyKid Farm Corgi are aware that all Corgis are at risk of Type 1 IVDD. We’ve provided the know information of what they can do to help keep their Corgi as healthy as possible in order to lessen the risk of IVDD while confident we’ve done our part as a responsible breeder.
We want our NannyKid Farm Corgi families to enjoy love, healthy, happy lives with their Corgi.