

## How to Avoid Deformities in Growing Pups

All too often we see young pups with bent legs, or knuckling, at an early age. Many believe these problems are the result of rapid growth and the solution is to feed the young pup an adult food. Slowing the growth rate is an outdated but time-honoured method of avoiding such problems, but is this really the best method, and is there any valid basis for this treatment in science?

Bent legs and similar deformities are often classified as metaphyseal osteopathy, sometimes known as hypertrophic osteodystrophy (HOD), and whilst the condition is currently recognised as being idiopathic in nature, recent research indicates a strong causal link between the condition and nutrient imbalances in the pup's diet.

The single largest influence of HOD and the practice of feeding adult diets to pups is the failure for the pup to develop in accordance with its true genetic potential. For breeders this can be absolutely catastrophic. The failure to remove nutrition as a limitation to the expression of genetic potential in a breeding program makes a mockery of the professional breeder's attempts to improve or concentrate specific genetic traits. A *bona fide* breeding program can only advance when the true genetic value of the progeny is expressed and identified. Failure to achieve this aim reduces any breeding program, to the equivalent of "shooting in the dark"!

Whilst slowing the growth of the pup could possibly avoid HOD, the subsequent shortage of essential nutrients will limit the expression of true genetic expression and result in an animal that is usually smaller and less well developed compared to its well grown counterpart. Many sadly believe lost growth can be recouped later in life through compensatory growth, and whilst compensatory growth will make up for some of the lost potential, it will never allow the pup to regain all that is lost, or to be a true expression of its breeding.

A recent trial with a Staffy/Boxer cross puppy with severe metaphyseal osteopathy showed remarkable growth and repair of the severely bent legs in as little as three weeks of unlimited feeding. The diets used were stages one and two of the LifeWise puppy feeding program, and the results were amazing. Not only did the pup grow at an amazing rate (1.1kg of weight gain in 7 days), but the legs immediately started straightening and the knuckling that continually tripped the eleven-week-old pup disappeared within four days.

The results of this trial are similar too other instances of HOD that have been rectified in similarly short periods when the same nutritional program has been employed. In fact, the LifeWise puppy feeding strategy encourages pups to develop at their maximum rate of growth all the way to maturity. The common response is to see the pups subsequently develop superior muscling and conformation attributes that have long been sought-after in the kennels adopting this strategy.

Whilst you may be forgiven for believing all commercially available puppy rearing diets are balanced to allow the unfettered development of the pup, the reverse is often the case, and is probably the single largest reason the belief in slow growth has evolved. Fortunately, Mother Nature is heavily biased to perfect rapid growth when conditions allow, rather than distorted growth as believed by many.

*About the author... Bill Wiadrowski is a consulting nutritionist who has worked in the field of performance animal nutrition for over 50 years. His latest development is the LifeWise range of next generation foods that are rapidly gaining acclaim for their ability to repair common gut and skin sensitivities issues in domestic canines.*

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