



For Active Dogs!

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Coaching dog enthusiasts to embrace the unique needs of active dogs through teaching, mentoring and educational media

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Digit Injuries – Risk Factors



Sheltie using its left dewclaw to help make a sharp turn in the weave poles.

Greetings!

A retrospective study was just published (see reference below) that examined **digit injuries in dogs training and competing in agility**. The goal of the study was to identify potential risk factors for digit injuries in these dogs.

The study used an extensive, internet-based survey in which owners/handlers were asked questions related to the nature of their dogs' digit injuries, their dogs' physical description including the feet, the possible cause and circumstances of the injuries, the dogs' agility training and performance characteristics, and dog and owner demographic information. Note that confirmation of a digit injury by a veterinarian was not required.

Completed surveys were received for 207 dogs with and 874 dogs without digit injuries.

The **5th digits (outside toes) were the most commonly injured**, and those injuries were twice as common in the front feet as compared to the rear feet. **Dewclaws were the least commonly injured digit** (occurring in 7.3% of dogs that had dewclaws). The two most common injuries were fractures (32.5% of injuries) and sprains/strains (27.8%).

After performing a multivariable logistic regression analysis (which takes into account the effects that multiple contributing factors might have on the outcome), **the following factors were associated with significantly increased odds of a digit injury:**

- **Being a Border Collie** (Odds Ratio, 2.4). This means that Border Collies were 2.4 times more likely to experience a toe injury than other breeds.

Upcoming Events:

For Veterinarians, Physical Therapists and Veterinary Technicians/Nurses

Jan. 26 - 28, 2018
[Canine Sports Medicine Module](#)
Canine Rehabilitation Institute
Coral Springs, FL
www.caninerehabinstitute.com

Mar. 24 - 26, 2018
[Canine Sports Medicine Module](#)
Canine Rehabilitation Institute
Coral Springs, FL
www.caninerehabinstitute.com

June 15 - 17, 2018
[Canine Sports Medicine Module](#)
Canine Rehabilitation Institute
Wheat Ridge, CO
www.caninerehabinstitute.com

For Dog Lovers/Trainers

June 6 - 8, 2018
[Vet Festival](#)
Veterinary Education for Tomorrow:
A unique outdoor conference that is clinically relevant to every veterinary practice and their staff.
Surrey, England
www.vetfestival.co.uk

- [Having long nails](#) (Odds Ratio = 2.4)
- [Not having front dewclaws](#) (Odds Ratio = 1.9)
- [Higher weight-to-height ratio](#) (Odds Ratio = 1.5)

The following factor was associated with significantly **decreased** odds of injury:

- Increasing age of the dog (Odds Ratio = 0.8)

The authors state that the results of this study should be cautiously interpreted because of potential respondent and recall bias and lack of review of medical records. With that in mind, they concluded that retaining healthy dewclaws, maintaining lean body mass, and trimming nails short for training and competition may decrease the likelihood of digit injuries in agility dogs.

Reference:

Debra C. Sellon, Katherine Martucci, John R. Wenz, Denis J. Marcellin-Little, Michelle Powers, Kimberley L. Cullen. A survey of risk factors for digit injuries among dogs training and competing in agility events. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2018;252:75–83

Sept. 1 - 3, 2018
[Coaching the Canine Athlete Seminar](#)
 Canine Seminar at Sea
 Ontario, Canada
csascanada@gmail.com

Sept. 29 - Oct. 1, 2018
[Coaching the Canine Athlete Seminar](#)
 Guides Canins Inc
 St. Lazare (Québec), Canada
chelsea@guidescanins.com

Nov. 16 - 18, 2018
[Canine Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation Conference](#)
 For Dog Trainers
 Frederick, MD
info@caninesports.com

Exercise Tips & Tricks

Important considerations for canine strength-building (resistance) exercises:

1. As much as possible, the **exercises should be non-concussive**. Active dogs are already experiencing a lot of concussion in training and competition – why add more impact on the joints and soft tissues if it isn't necessary? Luckily there are numerous exercises that are excellent for building a dog's muscular strength without increasing the amount of impact on the body. Many non-concussive exercise options will be presented in the ForActiveDogs Newsletter.

2. **Exercises should be targeted to the areas of your dog's body that needs them most**. To do that, you should first feel your dog's muscles – the shoulder, back, and abdominal muscles as well as the quads and hamstrings. Are they nice and large? If so, that is an indication of long-term exercise (and probably genetics). Are they firm and well-defined? If so, that is an indication of recent exercise. If not, then start doing exercises that target those specific muscles. Good news: we plan to describe a wide variety of targeted exercises in the ForActiveDogs Newsletter over the next several months.

3. **You must overload the muscles to build them**. This doesn't mean that your dog should do the exercise until exhausted. Instead, you should assess your dog before the exercise, and stop the exercise when your dog is panting more than when the exercise was started. Working to overload will require a change in how you view your dog's work. The goal is not to be successful in performing the exercise. Instead, your goal is to work the dog just a little bit harder each time the exercise is performed – just hard enough that each day brings a significant challenge.



This dog is demonstrating the diagonal leg lifts core exercise. His front and rear legs are being pulled forward and rearward just a bit to increase the difficulty of the exercise, so that he can be worked to overload.

Thank You!

Thank you for continuing to seek out new information that will help you in your life-long journey with your active dog. The bite-size tidbits included in each newsletter are designed to help you keep your canine partner healthy and active well into the senior years.

We have lots of newsletters planned for the future, but if there is a topic you would like to see addressed, don't hesitate to contact us at info@caninesports.com and tell us.



Congratulations to Chris Zink for winning the Lecturer of the Year WEBCON 2017 award!

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