

A Proactive Approach to Canine Osteoarthritis

As a veterinary technician, you play an important role in helping to recognize the early signs of osteoarthritis (OA) in your canine patients as well as educating dog owners about this common joint disease. By proactively observing your patients and engaging with clients, you can help dog owners understand why routine OA exams are essential and help more dogs get the treatment they need. This session will pair technical information on the disease state with communication tools and techniques so that veterinary technicians will leave this presentation feeling empowered in their observations and conversations with the veterinarian and pet owners.

Speaker Bio:

A licensed veterinary technician with master's degrees in physiology and counseling psychology, Kara Burns began her career in human medicine working as an emergency psychologist. She is the founder and president of the Academy of Veterinary Nutrition Technicians and teaches nutrition courses around the world as a nutritional consultant. She is also the director of veterinary nursing for NAVC Publishing as well as the editor-in-chief of Today's Veterinary Nurse.

Ms. Burns is a member of many national, international, and state associations and holds positions on many boards in the profession, including American Academy of Veterinary Nutrition executive board technician liaison, Western Veterinary Conference technician education manager, NAVTA past president, PrideVMC board treasurer, International Society for Sports Nutrition, and the Pet Nutrition Alliance executive board.

Ms. Burns has authored many articles, textbooks, and textbook chapters and is an internationally invited speaker, focusing on topics of nutrition, leadership, and technician utilization. She has been featured on the cover of the Veterinary Technician Journal and The NAVTA Journal. She was named the NAVC Technician Speaker of the Year in 2013 and in 2016. She was also the 2010 NAVTA Veterinary Technician of the Year, as well as the 2011 Dr. Franklin Loew Lecturer.

Her pet family includes a French bulldog, an Aussie/border collie cross, birds, and 3 indoor cats.

Learning Objectives:

1. Review the stages of osteoarthritis (OA), the cycle of untreated OA, and goals and considerations regarding the multimodal management of OA.
2. Understand the importance of an early assessment and address the common misconceptions about OA (e.g., age, breed, clinical signs).
3. Recognize best practices for being proactive in OA assessment--what to look for, what is commonly missed, and tips to excel.
4. Learn communication techniques to project a consistent message and appropriately deliver the relevant information about OA to dog owners.

Agenda:

- Role of Vet Techs
 - What is OA?
 - What are some early indicators of OA in dogs?

- Commonly Diagnosed vs Underdiagnosed
- 4 Stages of Canine OA
- The Cycle of Untreated OA
- Steps for Success
 - Assessment
 - Observation
 - Conversation
 - Treatment & Management
 - Multimodal Approach
 - Follow-up
- Early Assessment
 - Proactive Observation
 - Proactive Conversation - Owner
 - Questions you can ask.
 - Common signs of OA
 - Normal & Abnormal Posture and Gait
 - Proactive Conversation - Vet
- Multimodal Treatment
 - Exercise & Physical Therapy
 - Early Stages (1-2)
 - Goals & Considerations
 - Later Stages (3-4)
 - Goals & Considerations
 - Nutrition & Weight Control
 - Goals & Considerations
 - Joint Health Supplements
 - Goals & Considerations
 - Benefits across various stages
 - Medications (NSAIDs)
 - Goals & Considerations
 - Benefits across various stages
 - Adjunct Therapy
 - Goals & Considerations
 - Other Considerations
 - Proactive Conversation - Steps to increase compliance
 - Before the pet owner leaves
 - After the pet owner leaves
- Follow Up and Management
 - Follow-up appointments
 - Proactive Conversation
 - Feedback Programs