

Does omega-3 algal oil improve osteoarthritis in dogs?

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Credit: University of Bristol

Owners of dogs showing signs of osteoarthritis are being asked by the University of Bristol's School of Veterinary Sciences to take part in the first study of its kind to find out whether an omega-3 oil derived from algae can help dogs with osteoarthritis (OA).

The double blind placebo-controlled trial, funded by the Dogs Trust, is

led by Dr Jo Murrell and a team of animal health and welfare specialists in the Vet School.

The aim of the study is to investigate whether docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) reduces pain and improves quality of life in dogs with OA. Dogs will be randomly allocated to either the treatment or placebo group and will be given capsules on a daily basis throughout the study.

DHA is an [omega-3 fatty acid](#) found in fish oil and in higher levels in algae. Fish oil supplementation can have a beneficial effect on some aspects of OA in dogs and recent research has shown that DHA may have specific anti-inflammatory effects when given in higher quantities than are present in [fish oil](#). There are no known side effects associated with DHA.

OA, also known as [degenerative joint disease](#), is the most common type of arthritis seen in dogs and is a very common cause of chronic pain, particularly in older dogs. OA is a slowly progressing disease where the cartilage in the dog's joints breaks down and causes friction between the bones resulting in outgrowths of new bone forming, known as osteophytes.

Signs of OA include difficulty jumping up, stiffness after walks, difficulty walking up stairs, and reduced willingness to exercise or play, and the study team would be keen to hear from the owners of dogs experiencing these problems.

Owners will be asked to bring their dog to the Vet School for five separate visits over a four-month period and at each appointment complete questionnaires to assess the dog's pain, stiffness and quality of life. The dog's bodyweight distribution will also be measured at each appointment using a pressure sensitive plate.

Megan Goff, Research Technician in Companion Animal Studies, said: "By taking part in the study your dog can help us understand the role this specific omega-3 plays in alleviating pain associated with osteoarthritis. The knowledge we gain from this research will make a contribution towards improving potential treatments available for osteoarthritis and improve the lifelong welfare of the many [dogs](#) worldwide affected by osteoarthritis."

More information: More information can be found on the project's website: www.bristol.ac.uk/vetscience/research/cts/canine-arthritis—omega-3-dha-study/

Provided by University of Bristol

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