**Patella Luxation**

A dislocating patella (kneecap) is one of the most common joint abnormalities seen in dogs. This condition is most commonly seen in toy and miniature breeds – particularly Yorkshire terriers, Pomeranians, Chihuahuas and Boston terriers. It has also been found it is one and a half times more common in females. Why – we don’t know. Puppies are usually born with it and clinical signs begin showing from four months of age.

The symptoms of a dislocating kneecap will depend on the severity as well as the amount of degenerative arthritis that is involved. Typically, a dog will show occasional skipping or hind limb lameness. It only feels pain at the moment the kneecap slips out of the thigh bone’s ridges that normally hold it in place. The dog will often be pain free while the kneecap is out of position and then show some discomfort as it pops backin to place.

The vet will usually be able to confirm the diagnosis by manually luxating the patella but may also want to take x-rays to assess the severity of the condition or if any arthritis is present.

Treatment depends on the grade of patella luxation present and can be both medical or surgical. Many dogs with a lowgrade luxation – meaning that the patella only rarely moves out of place and then moves back on its own – are managed medically. This involves ensuring the dog stays at a healthy weight and receives supplements to support joint health throughout life, and lower the risk of arthritis developing. Dogs with a more severe luxation require surgery. There are a number of surgical options available, including deepening the grove the patella sits in or stabilising the patella to one side to prevent sideways movement.

If you are concerned your dog may have luxating patellas – book an appointment with your vet who can give you advice on the best option to ensure your pet is able to continue living a healthy, active, pain-free life.