

Practical Application of Prolotherapy in Canines: Case Studies

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The current surge of interest in Prolotherapy—for humans and animals—is gratifying. As a holistic veterinarian and Prolotherapy practitioner in New York City, I have found the demand for treatment increasing, along with the number of successful outcomes. Effective and practical, Prolotherapy can easily be incorporated into modern veterinary practice when physical rehabilitation of chronic joint pain is required. In my experience, it can sometimes obviate the need for orthopedic surgery—especially meaningful in an older animal—yet it can also be used in an adjunctive capacity to some other treatments, including surgery. The common denominator for use is degenerative disease, trauma or injury.

The results are generally predictable and include improved mobility and quality of life for the pet, along with a reduction in—and often elimination of—pain. Yet each individual animal responds differently to Prolotherapy. I usually expect to see significant improvements, if not resolution, in one to three sessions, while more extreme or challenging cases may require a longer series of treatments.

I am happy to share with you some snapshots from my recent caseload.

CASE STUDY 1: “DEGENERATIVE MYELOPATHY AND HIP DYSPLASIA”

Clara, an 11-year-old yellow Labrador weighing in at 60lb, is a beloved family pet. Her owners are committed to maintaining her health and preserving her quality of life. She presented for Prolotherapy treatment with degenerative myelopathy in the hindquarters. She had also been diagnosed with arthritis and hip dysplasia.

At first, Clara had responded well to acupuncture and electric stimulation. However, within five months, the efficacy of her treatment plan declined. At that time, she became noticeably weaker, and walked awkwardly with the hind legs crossing over. She underwent her first

ABSTRACT

Prolotherapy is easily incorporated into the modern veterinary practice and can often obviate the need for orthopedic surgery. This article provides six case reviews of animals successfully treated with Prolotherapy.

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Prolotherapy treatment and, immediately after, was able to walk without the crossover.

Three weeks later, after her second session, Clara could walk comfortably again. Her balance and stride were markedly more stable, with her hind legs staying parallel, about 9 to 10 inches apart. This pattern was to be seen after every one of Clara’s Prolotherapy sessions. The improvement was sustained for approximately six weeks, when her hind end started to weaken again. A third Prolotherapy treatment focusing on Clara’s back and hips, improved motion and restored the old girl’s vigor. Although other health issues interrupted her Prolotherapy treatments for a few weeks, she was able to have another session about a month later. Again, Clara’s mobility was satisfactorily restored. However, just two days later, Clara skidded on a slippery floor and injured her front elbow. Her recuperation took several weeks and, although she received acupuncture and electric stimulation, she did not receive another Prolotherapy treatment for her hindquarters for more than two months. Again, the results were dramatic, with greatly increased mobility and comfort for Clara.

CASE STUDY 2: “RELIEVING THE RIPPLING EFFECTS OF TRAUMA TO THE PATELLA”

The mixed lab puppy, full of beans, had managed to injure herself somehow. Diagnosed with bilateral medial patella subluxation, four-month-old, 55lb Aria was found to have extreme remodeling on the left patella. The persistence on the patella was attributed to trauma according to prior vet reports. Radiographically both hips were within normal limits.

On physical exam, positive draw was noted on the right but was considerably more marked on the left knee. Palpitation of the knee, left hip and lumbar area demonstrated pain at all three sites. At this point, Aria was holding up her left leg and was completely non-weight bearing on that side.

At her first Prolotherapy treatment, Aria received injections in the painful areas. Following the session, she was able to bear partial weight, no longer held up the leg and was toe touching. The results were even more pronounced after Aria's second Prolotherapy treatment. She was found to have completely restored weight-bearing ability although noticeable stiffness behind remained. This case is ongoing. Aria is scheduled to receive a third Prolotherapy treatment soon.

CASE STUDY 3: "PROLOTHERAPY AND THE POWER OF THREE: THREE SESSIONS, THREE WEEKS APART"

Rory, a black lab mix, had gradually lost hind end stability over the course of his 13 years. The 75lb dog's condition was compounded by congenital dysplasia of the left hip. Weak and with his back legs touching, he would frequently lose his balance and fall over. This situation lasted for about a year until he began Prolotherapy treatment. Rory underwent a total of three Prolotherapy sessions at three-week intervals, targeted to restore flexibility to his back and both hips. There was notable progress after each treatment, with Rory's legs separating and, each time, he showed increasing ability to support himself. After the third treatment, Rory's hind legs were separated by at least 10 inches. No further treatment was necessary.

CASE STUDY 4: "THE PIT BULL AND THE PARTIAL REPAIR ACL INJURY"

Eight-year-old Ernie had been diagnosed with a partial repair ACL on his left knee six months prior. This was not his first ACL injury—he had already undergone ACL repair with a figure 8 on his right knee two years beforehand. Now, 60lb Ernie was presenting with a moderate (2 out of 5) lameness on the left hind leg. The treatment regimen for his left knee was administered as follows: two Prolotherapy treatments three weeks apart, with ultrasound therapy 3–4 times a week in the interval. Ernie is now walking and running normally.

CASE STUDY 5: "THE HUNT FOR RELIEF FOR DUTCH"

Dutch, a large black lab, has been trained as a hunting dog since puppyhood. He is usually active and enthusiastic about his work. At just 2.5 years old, he had undergone knee surgery, with a figure 8 repair, and a small amount of physical therapy. The 90lb dog returned to work, but 18 months later clearly had difficulty bearing weight on the knee. The problem—a reinjury—manifested after a run in the park. Laser therapy, acupuncture and ultrasound were administered to the knee on two separate occasions

but improvement was marginal. Since the knee had no positive draw and the surgery site remained intact, it was recommended that the injured knee should be given time to heal and Dutch was kept on cage rest for two weeks. The results were still not satisfactory. At this point, a Prolotherapy treatment was administered and, immediately, for the first time since the re-injury, Dutch could bear weight comfortably on the leg. The dog was able to walk in a more normal fashion. Dutch's owner was advised that another session would aid Dutch's recovery further.

CASE STUDY 6: "A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE IN AN EXTREME CASE OF BILATERAL HIP DYSPLASIA"

Thurman, a distinctive 80lb 13-year-old dog, was noticeable for more than his bobtail. He had been diagnosed with two dysplastic hips and presented with severe instability—wobbling and collapsing, with hind legs crossing, and buckling. On examination, he was found to have general weakness, with pain in both hips and in the back area. He was started on a series of three Prolotherapy treatments, three weeks apart. (See *Figure 1*.) The benefits were marked after his second session, when Thurman's aggravated condition was relieved, with an end to the wobbling, buckling and crossing over. The ongoing general weakness also improved somewhat, and became episodic rather than constant. After his third treatment, Thurman's condition responded convincingly again, with complete elimination of pain—as evidenced by palpation—and increased joint stability. Thurman's mobility improved noticeably. ■



Figure 1. Bobtail Thurman has two dysplastic hips and is receiving Prolotherapy treatments to help regain mobility and reduce pain.