

Scar Tissue in Dogs - Understanding Healing and How Therapy Supports Recovery

What is Scar Tissue?

Forms as part of the body's natural healing process after an **injury, surgery, or repetitive strain**. When tissue such as muscle, skin, or fascia is damaged, the body repairs it with new collagen fibres.

This repair tissue is **denser and less flexible** than the original tissue. While it restores strength, it can also **restrict movement, cause stiffness**, and sometimes **lead to discomfort** if it forms excessively or in an area of frequent movement.

Common Causes of Scar Tissue Formation

- Surgical procedures (e.g., spay/neuter, cruciate ligament repair, tumour removal)
- Traumatic injuries (cuts, muscle tears, wounds)
- Repetitive strain or chronic inflammation
- Old injuries that healed without therapy support
- Conditions causing ongoing tissue stress, such as joint instability

Signs Your Dog May Have Scar Tissue Issues

- Stiffness or reduced flexibility near the affected area
- Sensitivity or flinching when touched
- Uneven muscle development or posture changes
- Limping or altered gait
- Reduced performance in active or working dogs
- Licking or chewing a healed area

Scar tissue itself is not harmful, but **excessive or restrictive scar formation** can limit movement and cause secondary muscular tension.

How Therapy Helps

Osteopathic and massage therapies can be highly effective in managing scar tissue and its effects. These hands-on techniques help to **soften, mobilise and realign** scar tissue while improving surrounding muscle function and comfort.

Therapeutic Benefits:

- **Improves tissue flexibility:** Gentle manipulation helps loosen fibrous adhesions, restoring natural movement.
- **Enhances circulation & lymphatic flow:** Increases oxygen and nutrient supply to promote healing and reduce swelling.
- **Reduces discomfort:** Relieves tightness or pulling sensations associated with scar tissue.
- **Prevents compensatory strain:** Helps maintain balanced movement patterns throughout the body.
- **Supports nerve & fascia mobility:** Encourages better communication & movement through the tissues.
- **Promotes relaxation and healing:** Gentle techniques reduce pain signals & calms the nervous system.

Therapists work carefully around healing or healed scars, adjusting pressure and technique according to the tissue's condition and the dog's comfort.

Aftercare and Ongoing Support

- Always follow **veterinary advice** before starting therapy, especially after surgery.
- Allow **appropriate healing time** before deep tissue work begins.
- Keep the area **clean, dry, and protected** in the early healing phase.
- Use **controlled exercise** to maintain mobility and prevent stiffness.
- Regular **massage or osteopathic sessions** can help maintain tissue health and prevent new adhesions.
- Encourage **gentle stretching or movement** under guidance once approved by your vet or therapist.

Therapy supports recovery from scar tissue by improving flexibility, reducing discomfort, and helping your dog move freely and comfortably again.