

Canine Lumbosacral Disease

Understanding Lower Back Pain and How Therapy Can Help

What is Lumbosacral Disease?

Refers to problems affecting the **lumbosacral junction** - the area where the **lumbar spine (lower back)** meets the **sacrum (pelvic region)**. This is where the spinal cord and nerves that control the hind limbs, bladder, and tail pass through a narrow canal.

When this space becomes compressed or inflamed, it can cause **pain, weakness, and neurological signs**. The condition is sometimes also called **Lumbosacral Stenosis** or **Cauda Equina Syndrome**.

Causes and Contributing Factors

- Degeneration of the intervertebral disc between L7 and S1
- Osteoarthritis or bone changes narrowing the spinal canal
- Injury or trauma to the lower spine
- Repetitive strain from jumping, twisting, or working activities
- Congenital narrowing or instability in the lumbosacral joint
- Muscle weakness or poor core stability

Common Signs and Symptoms

- Stiffness or pain in the lower back
- Difficulty rising from lying or sitting positions
- Reluctance to jump, climb stairs, or run
- Hind limb weakness or wobbliness
- Tail held low or reluctance to wag
- Changes in posture or gait
- In severe cases, loss of bladder or bowel control

Symptoms often progress gradually and may appear worse after exercise or rest.

How Therapy Helps

Osteopathic and massage therapies can offer valuable support for dogs with lumbosacral disease, especially when used alongside veterinary management. These therapies aim to **reduce discomfort, improve mobility, and support spinal and muscular health**.

Therapeutic Benefits:

- **Relieves muscle tension:** Reduces tightness in the lumbar and pelvic regions that can increase pressure on the nerves.
- **Improves circulation:** Enhances blood and nutrient flow to help reduce inflammation and promote healing.
- **Supports spinal alignment:** Gentle osteopathic techniques encourage balance and mobility in the lower spine and hips.
- **Reduces compensatory strain:** Helps prevent overuse injuries in the front limbs or opposite side.
- **Improves flexibility and comfort:** Keeps soft tissues supple and promotes freer movement.
- **Encourages relaxation:** Calms pain-related stress, improving overall well-being.

These techniques are always applied **gently and safely**, tailored to the dog's comfort level and condition.

Aftercare and Management Tips

- Follow your **veterinarian's diagnostic and treatment plan**, which may include imaging, medication, or controlled exercise.
- Maintain a **healthy weight** to reduce spinal pressure.
- Use **non-slip flooring** and avoid high-impact activities such as jumping or rough play.
- Schedule **regular therapy sessions** to maintain flexibility and monitor progress.

Therapy helps dogs with lumbosacral disease by easing discomfort, improving spinal mobility, and supporting long-term comfort and quality of life.