

Dogs should be screened for elbow dysplasia

Q: Our 8-month-old Labrador retriever was recently diagnosed with elbow dysplasia. We chose a breeder very carefully to avoid getting a dog prone to hip dysplasia. We didn't know we should have asked the breeder if her dogs had elbow problems, too. We are very concerned as we learned that our dog needs elbow surgery. What can you tell us about elbow dysplasia?

Ask the Vets



Dr. Jaffe

Elbow dysplasia is not as uncommon as you might think. It is one of the most frequently diagnosed causes of forelimb lameness in juvenile large and giant breed dogs.

Elbow dysplasia has received a great deal of attention in recent years due to the realization that elbow disease has a hereditary basis. Elbow dysplasia is a disorder of the elbow joint which involves formation of bone fragments or cartilage tears within the joint. These lesions form due to abnormal growth of the bones of the front legs when your dog is approximately 4-6 months of age.

These abnormal pieces of bone and cartilage, when present in the elbow, cause your dog discomfort. A dog with elbow dysplasia is usually lame in one or both front legs and may limp after activity or following a long nap. Arthritis of the elbow joint is a complication of elbow dysplasia and unfortunately is a life-long condition.

Your veterinarian may be able to diagnose elbow dysplasia based on a physical examination and elbow x-rays. Even with x-rays and an orthopedic examination, the diagnosis is sometimes hard to establish.

Elbow dysplasia is a broad term which includes several conditions: fragmented coronoid process, ununited anconeal process, or osteochondritis dissecans. These may occur alone or in conjunction with one another.

Treatment of elbow dysplasia involves surgical removal of the bone fragments or cartilage tears. Surgical specialists use arthroscopes to explore the elbow joint and remove the offending pieces of bone or cartilage. Arthroscopic surgery is less invasive than traditional surgery and results in a faster recovery and less arthritis.

Does your dog need surgery? If you elect not to have surgery performed to treat elbow dysplasia, your dog's arthritis will become more severe over time, no arthritis of the elbow becomes extensive, surgical treatment is of little benefit as the troublesome pieces of bone or cartilage cannot be removed. Unfortunately, this usually results in a lifetime of lameness.

Medical therapy consisting of weight management, anti-inflammatory and joint protective drugs, and exercise restriction is used in conjunction with surgery or when surgery is no longer an option. When arthritis is severe and conventional surgery is not effective, elbow joint replacement surgery can be performed. Both hip and elbow dysplasia are congenital problems and we discourage the breeding of animals affected with these conditions.

Most breeders conscientiously screen their dogs for hip dysplasia and don't use dogs with questionable hips in their breeding lines. Breeders should also screen their dogs for elbow dysplasia! The Orthopedic Foundation for Animals evaluates x-rays of canine hips and elbows for the presence or absence of hip and elbow dysplasia. The OFA keeps a registry of dogs 24 months of age and older with hip and/or elbow dysplasia and will grade your dog's hips and elbows based on the severity of changes within the joint.

Breeds that have been shown by the OFA to be at high risk for elbow dysplasia are rottweilers, Bernese mountain dogs, German shepherd dogs, and Newfoundlanders. In addition, we have seen a great number of Mastiffs with dysplastic elbows.

As always, if your dog is limping with what may appear as a sprain, we advise that you consult your veterinarian as soon as possible. Early treatment of elbow dysplasia results in fewer long-term complications.

Dr. Michael and Tracy Jaffe are Birmingham-Bloomsfield Hills-area veterinarians. Send questions to be addressed in this column to Ask the Vets, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 East Maple, Birmingham MI 48009. Or e-mail askthetvet@juna.com.



Outdoor extreme: For the serious outdoor chef, outdoor grills can be as extravagant as this Home Expo sample that features a cutting station and natural-looking brick facing. The styles and frills of grills are becoming as popular as the outdoor dining set.

Outdoor lifestyle



Classic: Wrought iron in black and dark green, with thin clean lines, is still popular for outdoor furniture. This set is found at Expo Designer Center.

Hit the deck with low-maintenance, comfortable patio furniture

Outdoor living has become a lifestyle again.

More families are embracing the backyard: spending time with kids in the pool, grilling summer meals, hosting parties or just lounging on a deck. Proof of that trend is increased sales in high-quality patio furniture. And, of course, with the renewed lifestyle comes new trends.

It's low-maintenance, lasting, a little costly and made with vivid colors to create a light-hearted atmosphere. Some of the newest ideas are about style, others are functional. For example, the new tall, iron pub-style chairs are selling very well, said Victor Krawczyk of Corey Dinette based on Middlebelt in Livonia and on Rochester Road in Troy.

The pub style version of chairs and outdoor bars are perfect for decks, Krawczyk, the Rochester manager, said. "The chairs and the bar are high. People like to see over the edge of the deck, rather than have a view of wooden railings."

The biggest trend it seems, is the shift to sling material over 1990s popular thick cushions.

Sling material is made from high-quality comfortable nylon and doesn't absorb moisture. Unlike cushions, the material literally slings over chairs. It can be washed with a soft brush and quickly hoed down.

"And twenty minutes later

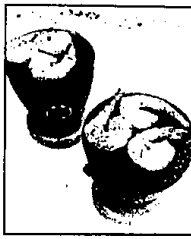
you're ready to relax," Krawczyk said. "It dries fast."

Plus with a simple cover, sling furniture can be left outdoors during winter months.

Both Krawczyk and also Casual Concepts co-owner Tony Chila, on North Main Street in downtown Rochester, agree that market umbrellas are surging in popularity. Market umbrellas are typically made of natural colored canvas or aluminum, about 8-foot round on an 8-foot-high hardwood or aluminum pole, with brass fittings. It

Please see PATIO, C2

By Lana Mini and Brenda Dominick
Staff Writers



A personal barbecue grill: The miniature cast-iron hibachi with protective wooden base for tabletop use allows a diner to take food to individually preferred measures of doneness. Available in pairs from Sur La Table, (800) 243-0852.

Propane or charcoal, barbecuers have many choices

BY NORMAN PRADY
SPECIAL WRITER

Along with robins, weeds and worms, spring brings renewal of the great barbecue debate: Charcoal vs. propane. The decision might be in your wine glass.

If you want to sip and chat with your guests, go with charcoal, said Martin Alberti, manager of the Thiesit Shop, a grill store in West Bloomfield. "Barbecuing" is not just about the food, Alberti said. "It's a social thing. So stick with the grill that takes longer to get ready. It's about enjoyment."

Visit with your guests, he said; talk about the Red Wings while you wait for the coals to glow.

But Alberti isn't blindly loyal to charcoal.

"Charcoal people think

they're doing something true, but if I didn't see what kind of grill the food was cooked on, I couldn't tell the difference."

On the other hand, she knows that charcoal people believe their method gives the food extra flavor, and she recommends briquettes that haven't been chemically treated in any way or natural lump charcoal.

She also likes wood chips added to charcoal for "an extra notch of flavor. Cherry and hickory. Mesquite for chicken and ribs."

And she likes propane. "When you talk about gas, there are three different kinds: One that uses special briquettes, one that uses flavor bars, and the infrared."

"Devoted charcoal users tell me that infrared gives the best steak taste. The high-tempera-

That which we call a barbecue

"Barbecue" is the name of an open-fire stove-like cooking unit, such as an outdoor grill, open pit or brick hearth, used for cooking food. (Some communities prohibit in-ground fire pits, so check local regulations before you make your pig-roast luau plans.)

"Barbecue" also is the name of what is being cooked, and the name of the event where a fire is cooking something. "To barbecue" is the name of the action of broiling or roasting seafood or landfood over fire.

"Texas barbecue" is beef brisket overcooked to shredding and then covered in a tomatoey sauce.

The word likely comes to our back yards from the American-Spanish *barbacoa*, in the language of the Taino tribe of the Arawak people of the Greater Antilles, the West Indies island group that includes Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola and Puerto Rico.

ture infrared energy pierces the meat and the juices are cooking inside."

It's from Thermal Engineering Corp., Alberti said, adding

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