

Patella Luxation (PL) - RANKING SYSTEM

Grade 0	Normal
Grade 1	The patella luxates manually but spontaneously returns to the trochlea when released.
Grade 2	The patella luxates spontaneously or on manipulation and remains luxated at a certain angle of the stifle joint. It is either spontaneously reduced on active flexion or extension or can be manually reduced by the examiner.
Grade 3	The patella remains luxated most of the time but can be manually reduced. However, relaxation occurs spontaneously.
Grade 4	The patella is permanently luxated and cannot be manually repositioned.
<u>Note:</u> Grade 1 and 2 are considered as intermittent PL. Grade 3 and 4 are considered as permanent PL.	

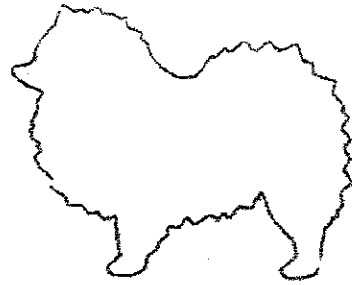
Please submit a copy of this completed form to The Japanese Spitz Club

Mrs Jean Moody,
46, Hanbury Close
Burnham
Bucks.
SL1 7EA
Tel; 01628548813

Results will be treated with the utmost confidence unless stated overleaf

Kindly address any queries to the Secretary of the Japanese Spitz Club – Mrs. Jean Moody,
46, Hanbury Close, Burnham, Bucks. SL1 7EA Tel; 01628 548813.
E-mail; jeanmoody611@btinternet.com

The Japanese Spitz Club



Patella Subluxation (Slipping Kneecap)

Clinical Description/Symptoms

Dislocation, for that is what is meant by the term slipping, of the patella (kneecap) is a common orthopaedic problem in dogs. In the normal dog virtually no sideways movement of the patella can be produced by manual pressure on it. The problem of the slipping patella may be categorised generally as intermittent or permanent and the classic signs associated with these are substantially different.

In the case of intermittent, the patella dislocates spontaneously during the dog's moving but will return to its normal position unaided. In the permanent type the patella will not do this and cannot even be manually manipulated back. The direction of dislocation is usually medial (middle) Lateral (sideways) dislocation is infrequent. Intermittent dislocation is characterised by sudden leg carriage during movement sometimes accompanied by a cry of pain, and within a few strides the leg is normal again. This may occur once a day, once a week or several times a day. The variation in frequency depends upon the amount of anatomical defect present. Sometimes the dislocation does not go back of its own accord and requires manual correction. When the dislocation is medial the stifle is rotated inwards and the hock is turned out. With lateral dislocation there is a marked outward turning of the foot and inward movement of the hock- this is the more severe disability of the two.

The permanent form is more serious and usually comes after a severe form of intermittent dislocation. When this form occurs in very young puppies, say three or four months old, a very severe deformation of the stifle joint can occur which can result in crippling lameness. This means that the stifle cannot be properly extended and when the puppy stands thus putting weight on the joint, the puppy crouches rather than stands upright. If both legs are affected then this crouching is severe. Some puppies with this learn to move just on their front legs whilst others are totally immobile. There are several reasons for patella to move from its correct position although the main reason is rotation of the tibial crest. Briefly, and firstly, if the ligaments holding the patella are, for some reason, not as taut as they should be it will slip. These ligaments run in grooves on the bones either side of the knee joint. Secondly, when the groove in the femur is too shallow, or in some cases non-existent, then the patella will slip. Thirdly, when there is little if any angulation of the stifle the patella has a tendency to pop out. A much rarer reason is following injury in the leg. Occasionally, for instance, a dog free running slips and catches its leg in a pot hole the leg will twist and damage the ligaments and the patella will pop out.

Diagnosis

The vet will easily recognise the problem when you visit. Your description of your observations will immediately suggest luxating patella and a simple manual examination of the leg will confirm. There is rarely a need to x-ray in this case but may be useful to assess the degree of deviation. The vet should check for concomitant problems.

Treatment

The most common treatment is surgical. An operation can be performed to either deepen the grooves in the bones, or shorten the ligaments supporting the patella but tibial crest transposition is the most common operation. After the operation the vet may prescribe a short course of anti-biotics and anti-inflammatories. Alternatively, depending upon the degree of luxation and the amount of pain the dog is in, the condition can be left alone. It is also worth mentioning that correct weight management could help the dog.

Management after surgery

When the dog comes home follow the vet's instruction regarding exercise. He will probably tell you to confine your dog i.e. crate, for several days apart, of course, from the calls of nature. He may, if your dog is overweight, also give you dietary advice. When you do start walking your dog again, do not give too much exercise at once, start to build up to normal distance gradually. It is also advisable to keep your dog grounded, no more attempted glides across the room off the back of the chair.

Breeding advice

Slipping patella is caused by a deformity. However, as already stated there are varying degrees of severity from those that can be manipulated by hand but never slip out on their own, to those that are out permanently. As breeder/exhibitors our aim should be to produce the perfect animal. Slipping patella is as much a deformity as a severely roached back, but much less obvious. It is generally accepted to be a problem that passes down the generations. It is therefore recommended that severely affected dogs are not used in breeding programmes. However, in a breed like ours with a small breeding pool, we cannot afford to ignore an animal with many great virtues that may have a slight problem. If a mate were carefully selected which did not exhibit the same problem it may achieve the right result. We therefore recommend that breeding stock be checked by a vet for slipping patella before they are used. A slipping patella is at the very least uncomfortable, usually painful and even if treated by operation the damage left behind can lead to arthritic conditions in later life.

Further information

If you want to find out more about luxating patella problems talk to your vet who should be able to explain things simply. There are some good books on the subject. "Luxation of the Patella" by Mike Stockman is one. It is a bit technical to start with but when he gets down to calling a spade a spade it is full of good sensible advice. Another book is "Dislocation of the Patella in small animals" by Lesley C Vaughan DSc, FRCVS, DVR. This is almost a D.I.Y. manual on diagnosis and treatment.

THE JAPANESE SPITZ CLUB RECOMMEND PATELLA GRADING.