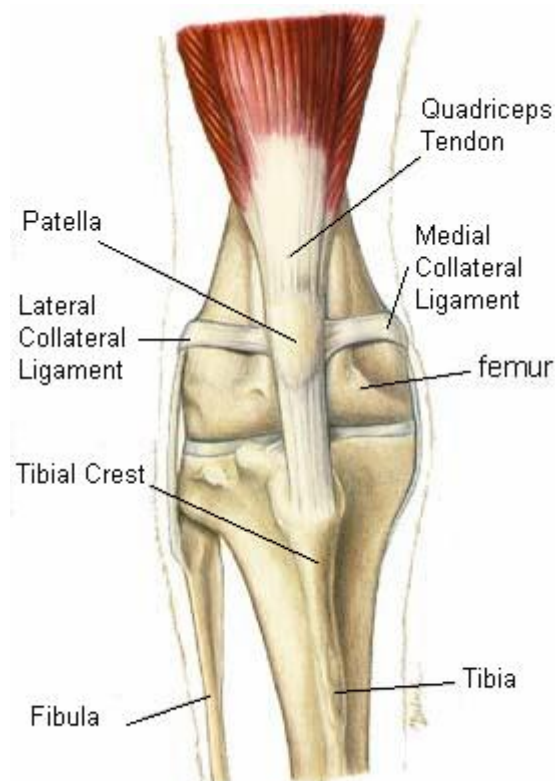


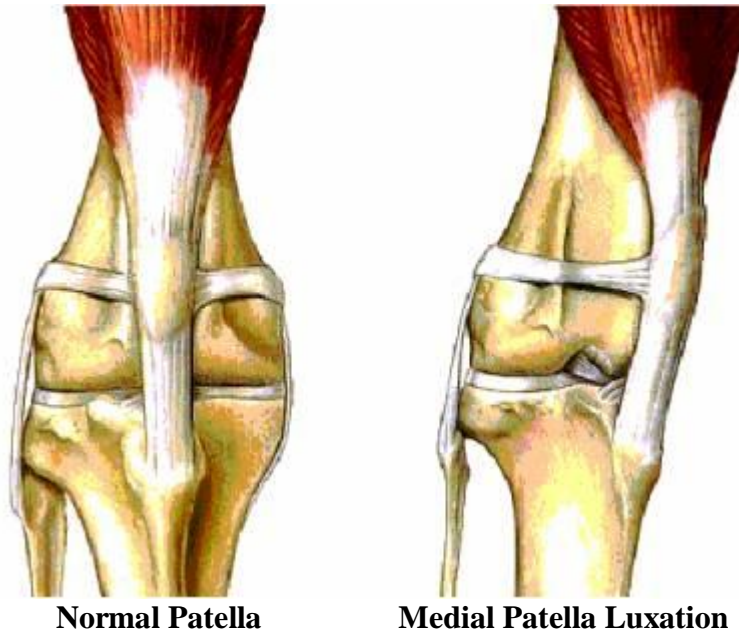
PATELLA (KNEE) SURGERY IN DOGS

Here at the Animal Aid we regularly see dogs in both the Welfare Shelter and from our private clients which have a condition known as *luxating patellas*. This condition is common in small breeds of dog and also in Staffordshire Bull Terriers as well as a few other larger breeds and is characterized by abnormal movement of the patella (knee cap) resulting in pain, lameness and eventually arthritis.

The structure of the canine knee (stifle) is quite similar to our own. The patella (knee cap) moves up and down in a groove located in the front of the femur and is anchored to the tibial crest by a ligament extending from the Quadriceps tendon (see diagram below). In affected dogs the knee is not properly held in place, either due to laxity of the supporting (collateral) ligaments, incorrect depth of the femoral groove, or unusual anatomy of the knee itself. This means the knee cap is able to slide either to the inside (medially) or the outside (laterally) of the groove. This results in an unstable knee and allows the patella to rub on either the medial or lateral ridge of the femur, eventually wearing it down and causing pain, arthritis and further instability of the knee.



The Normal Canine Stifle (Knee)



In the past the animals which came into the Animal Aid with this condition were euthanased due to the likelihood of long term complications as a result of arthritis which inevitably develops in later life in affected knees. Euthanasia of affected animals is still common practice in other shelters throughout Australia. Surgical repair is possible, but in the past the cost of the procedure has meant that stray animals are not eligible. For the past 5 years, the Animal Aid has been performing surgery on affected animals thanks to funding gleaned from public donations and also a “Patella Fund” which was started a few years ago and sponsored by local dog walking groups.

The surgery aims at tightening the supporting structures of the knee and providing extra support to keep the patella in place. Sometimes this requires deepening of the groove in the front of the femur or even re-location of the tibial crest (see normal stifle diagram for location of these structures). The recover after surgery takes months and these animals require special treatment for 6-8 weeks after the surgery. This can make finding new homes for affected dogs more difficult. Cage rest with no exercise is required for the first 12-14 days until stitches are removed, and then after this time the dog can slowly increase to normal exercise over the next 6-8 weeks.

If you have a small dog with occasional hind limb lameness or who skips on its hind legs at a run, it is probably worth having a Veterinarian check the knees. Surgery is best performed prior to the onset of arthritis and can greatly reduce future complications in the affected leg.

Donations can be made to the Animal Aid Patella Fund by calling 03 739 0300.