

Swimmer's Tail Prevention Tips

by Deborah Lee Miller-Riley

www.caninewatersports.com

[June 11, 2014 at 9:05am](#)

SWIMMERS TAIL. At the beginning of every water season when unconditioned dogs meet cool waters we see dogs suffer a painful case of Swimmers Tail. It's an inflammation at the base of the tail and spine that makes it difficult and painful for the dog to carry his tail up or move it normally. Some dogs can't sit or lie down comfortably. (Ever suffer from Sciatic Nerve pain?) Why some dogs suffer this injury and others don't is not completely understood. However, most dogs who get "swimmer's tail" are unconditioned dogs who over-do-it early in the swim season. Cold water can contribute to this injury, especially if the dog is not warmed up before entering the water.

Tips on How to prevent swimmer's tail.

- Condition your dog in pools during the winter. It's not just shoulders and necks that are taxed during swimming - that tail rudder works hard against water resistance.
- Warm-up your dog with some play on land before water work to help prepare the muscles for swim action.
- Wait for warm weather and warm water before swimming -- cold muscles tense up and that can lead to the injury.
- If you can't swim-condition your dog before spring DO NOT over-do-it on the first few swims of the season. Remember just five minutes of swimming is equivalent to 20 minutes of running on land. I know its tempting when the dog is having a great time -- but you are the grown-up right?
- Avoid jump work during the conditioning period -- tails often take a beating in jump work so save that skill for warm water and a conditioned dog.
- DO NOT CONTINUE SWIMMING YOUR DOG if you notice his reluctance to return to the water, the dog has a limp looking tail, the dog hesitates or refuses to sit or keeps looking back at his tail. Pay attention when there is any sign of discomfort or a reluctance to follow your direction. Your dog will need a week or more to recover from a bad case of swimmer's tail. If you catch it early enough your dog may recover sooner.

Treatment

See your Vet for allopathic treatment and drugs. Rest your dog.

Natural remedies for Swimmer's tail.

What has worked on my dogs and dozens of dogs who have attended our water camps, workshops and classes is rest, no swimming for several day and the use of Arnica and Bromelain:

- Homeopathic remedy - ARNICA MONTANA (used to treat pain from strains and sprains). <https://www.boironusa.com/products/arnica30c-pellets/>
- Supplement - Bromelain (enzyme extract derived from Pineapples with anti-inflammatory effects)
- Homeopathic Traumeel -- (anti-inflammatory) <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3085232/> and <http://www.healthypets.com/traumeel100tab.html> (SOLD OUTSIDE THE U.S. after Aug 2014)

Follow pet web site instructions or child directions on the remedy. Crush (a spoon works fine) homeopathic pellets or tabs inside a folded piece of clean white paper. Do not handle homeopathic remedy tabs. Form the paper into a funnel. Open dog's lip and pour the powdered remedy into the dog's mouth.