Canine Hip Dysplasia

Compensatory Movement Patterns

What happens to my dog's body when they have hip dysplasia?

Canine hip dysplasia starts in one joint, but soon has an impact on structures throughout the body. The hip joint becomes inflamed and painful, especially when the joint is taken into extension behind the body (which happens during normal walking, running, jumping and playing), or when the joint rotates outwardly during playing, running or turning.

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In dogs with hip dysplasia, we find a compensatory 'flow', or a change in posture and movement, as indicated in the image:

1. The head and neck will lower to shift more body weight off the hindlegs.
2. The hindlegs will step a little further forward under the body to reduce the degree of extension in the hips.
3. The pelvis and lumbar spine will flex, creating an arch in the back.
4. The forelegs will come a little further backwards underneath the body.
5. The carpus will become progressively more extended and lax as it carries more weight, in a poor biomechanical position.
6. The centre of mass will shift a little forward and down.

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