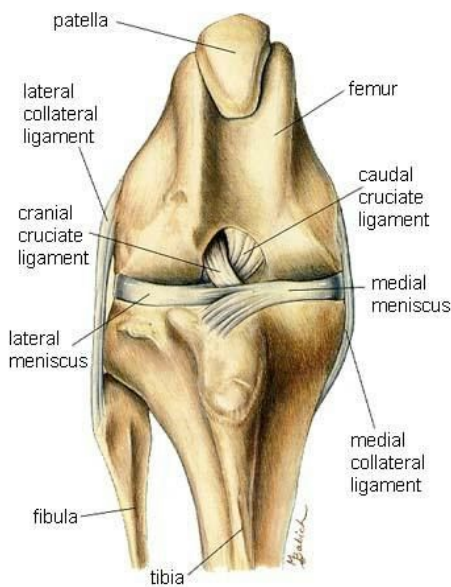


The most common hindlimb injury in dogs is the rupture of the cranial cruciate ligament (sometimes referred to as an acl injury). This ligament can be completely or partially ruptured. Usually the dog will not put weight on the leg when the ligament is completely ruptured. When the ligament is partially ruptured, the dog's signs can vary from a mild limp to, once again, not putting any weight on the leg.

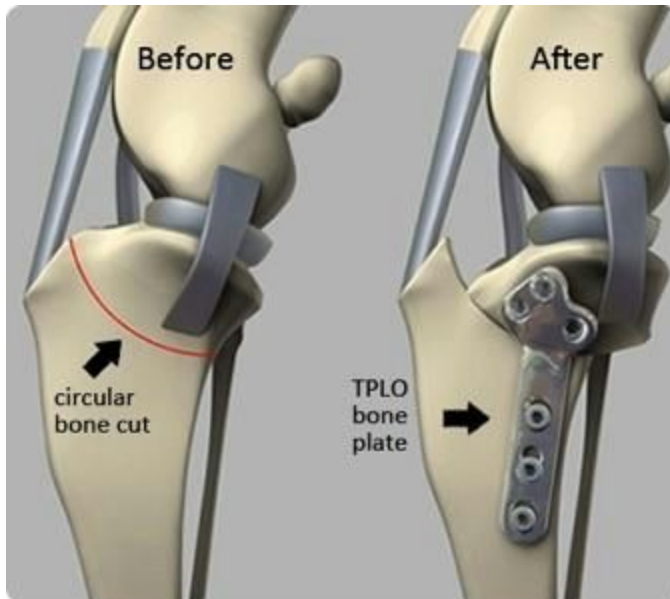
The stifle joint is the joint between the femur (thigh bone) and the tibia (shin bone). A ligament is a band of connective tissue which connects two bones. The cranial cruciate ligament is one of the ligaments which connects the thigh bone to the shin bone. This ligament contributes to the stability of the stifle joint. The way the ligament contributes to the stability is there is actually a downward slope on the shin bone running from the front to the back. As a result of this slope, when the dog puts weight on the leg, the shin bone wants to move forward. An intact cranial cruciate ligament prevents the shin bone from moving forward. Once the ligament ruptures, the shin bone moves forward each time the dog puts weight on the leg.



The ligament can rupture from trauma (less common) or it can more commonly degenerate and just weaken. The most common way we diagnose a ruptured cruciate ligament is by feeling excessive movement in the knee (called cranial drawer). Unfortunately, when a dog ruptures the acl ligament in one knee, they have a 40% chance of rupturing the acl ligament in the other knee within 2 years. The treatment of choice for acl ruptures is surgery. At Baring Blvd. Veterinary Hospital, we can perform two different types of surgery to stabilize the stifle joint.

The surgery most commonly performed in smaller dogs is an extracapsular repair. In this technique large monofilament suture is used to stabilize the knee.

The surgery most commonly performed in larger dogs is called a Tibial Plateau Leveling Osteotomy (TPLO). With the TPLO procedure, a curved cut is made in the shin bone and the weight bearing portion of the bone is rotated to reduce the downward slope. The bone is then stabilized with a metal plate and screws. As a result of this reduced slope, the need for a cruciate ligament is avoided.



If you have any questions, we can go over the advantages and disadvantages of each technique with you. If your dog has been limping or you would like to know more about cruciate ligament ruptures, give us a call to set up an appointment with Dr. Tony Luchetti.