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Why I REALLY Love Booties for Dogs



I've always been a big proponent of booties for dogs. Not only do I recommend them for dogs who walk on rough, hot, or otherwise hazardous surfaces (think, jagged glass-strewn and electrified ground), they do amazing work for those whose neuromuscular impairments make it difficult to grip slick surfaces.

Let's face it, the kind of ground we humans like beneath our feet is NOT the kind of ground that's best for a dog's paws. Hardwood laminates, tile, marble, terrazzo. This is not your mom's 1970s shag carpet or wall-to-wall of the '80s. Slick floors earn big style points these days.

Sure, it's comfy (tactilely speaking, anyhow), but if you're not wearing shoes, your feet are made of hair-lined smooth leather, and your gait requires a complex kind of four-footed coordination ... well then, you've got trouble — the slippery kind. Particularly if you've got arthritis, [intervertebral disc disease](#), or any other neuromuscular disease (of which there are hundreds in dogs).

Add in some excess weight and a fundamental lack of exercise and you've got the recipe for an extremely dysfunctional inability to properly grip the surface you're supposed to walk on. Hence, an uneasy gait, an unwillingness to ambulate, a loss of muscle mass, and a propensity for further injury.

Ouchy or uncoordinated? Got a slippery surface to walk on? [Obese](#)? Then you must be an aging dog in the U.S.!

The best way I know to describe it is as a downward spiral:

1. Dog has a bit of discomfort so he walks a bit slower than normal.
2. Dog loses a small amount of muscle mass (so little, his owners don't notice).
3. Dog starts to slip a teensy bit on his fancy home turf.
4. Dog gets nervous about moving around quickly.
5. Dog moves more slowly.

6. Dog loses more muscle mass (maybe now his owners start to notice).
7. Dog's reduced muscle mass means more weakness.
8. Dog's weakness means he's less able to ambulate, much less on slick surfaces.

This is typical. So typical, in fact, that the dog's owners usually have to resort to pain meds to reverse the downward spiral. Hence, the huge and growing industry of nutraceutical-slash-pharmaceutical canine pain control.

Not that I'm down on pain control. Yesterday's post should serve as sufficient proof of that. But when "alternative" approaches can yield better solutions, I'll be the first to complain that drugs get over-used. And this here's a prime example.

How so?

Well ... because nothing's better for keeping up a neuromuscularly impaired dog's function than exercise, and since even basic exercise is often not possible for dogs who are wont to play slip-n-slide in the place where they spend 99 percent of their time, then it stands to reason that no-slip booties are the most amazing thing since sliced bread — for these affected dogs, at least.

Consider my little Vincent. Though he weighs less than 20 pounds, his recent bout with intervertebral disc disease — and his subsequent surgery — means that he's not exactly the most coordinated pup on the block. While his pain has abated almost 100 percent, his neuromuscular function is only at 75 percent of what it used to be.

And that's a big deal. It means he can't jump as high, run as fast, or walk as normally as he used to. His feet slip underneath him, his legs splay out and his attempts to jump (when I'm too slow to restrict him) are pathetic. He's just not what he once was.

Which is why he wears booties now.



And they're cute. SO cute! And he really IS much more able to maneuver now than he has been for the past few months. His high comfort level with these little red shoes is impressive. After all, you'd think he'd like nothing better than to take them off. But he doesn't. He's OK with them. For which I'm eternally grateful, seeing as I've got high hopes for his continued improvement now that he's gained some terrestrial purchase.

And the best part? They're cheap! I'm sure there are other brands, but these [Dog Pawz](#) are making me really happy right about now. They say they're disposable, but on our fancy American floors I see this twelve-pack lasting me half a decade!

Does it mean he won't need pain meds? Not for now, seeing that pain's not his issue. As for my arthritis patients, we'll see. 'Cause dontcha know I've bought a bunch more booties in all kinds of sizes? I mean, why keep the good stuff all to myself?

Dr. Patty Khuly