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Post operative care guidelines – Orthopaedic surgery

Recovery following orthopaedic surgery is very important. The surgery is only the first step in an important journey of healing. The specifics of recovery will vary depending on the procedure, patient age and type of anticipated healing. The below is anticipated to be some general guidelines. The specific details will be discussed with the client on a case-by-case basis.

General instructions:

Your pet had a general anaesthetic and surgery. All seems fine today but if you have any concerns please contact your own veterinary surgeon or QVS (3359 0777 or 3384 2222). The dressing pad on the wound can be removed in 1-2 days – it should just peel off the skin quite easily. Do not worry if it comes off before then but please do not allow any licking of the wound. There is no need to clean or add any ointments. An Elizabethan collar should be placed there is any interest in licking the incision. Please inspect the incision daily, if any abnormal signs (excessive redness, abnormal smell, fluid discharge or opening of the incision) occur, please contact the hospital immediately (we have a 24 hour ER service, someone is always available to provide advice or care).

Medications have been prescribed which you will be required to administer:

Pain relief is often dispensed for home administration for varying periods (days to weeks). This usually incorporates an anti-inflammatory medication to be given orally (once or twice daily). Antibiotics are occasionally given for a short period. Additionally, pain relief that is absorbed across the skin (transdermal opioids) are sometimes used for between 3-7 days and can be removed at home once they are inactive.

Exercise:

Preventing over-activity in the recovery period is extremely important. Activity must be restricted for between 4-12 weeks to allow the tissues and bone to heal properly. Please note the following:

- Activity must be on the lead at all times when outside the house. Please note this includes the garden.
- Running or play in the house is not permitted.
- Confinement to a small room (bathroom or laundry) OR crate is strongly recommended to limit the risks of over-activity and its associated complications
- Stairs and slippery floors MUST be avoided. A sling should be used when walking on slippery surfaces for the first fortnight.
- Toilet breaks for 3-5 mins is recommended, 3-6x per day. These should be under leash control.
- Activity is typically increased in 2 week windows:
 - Week 1-2; toilet breaks as described above
 - Week 3-4; 10min walks, twice daily + toilet breaks
 - Week 5-6; 15min walks, twice daily + toilet breaks
 - Week 7-8; 20min walks, twice daily + toilet breaks

Most clients find a collapsible dog crate to be the ideal method of confinement. This can be purchased from local pet stores, online or from our clinic. They can be easily cleaned, provide a safe environment and can be moved between rooms in the house to maintain interaction.



Wound review and suture removal:

Please have the wound and progress reviewed 10-14 days after surgery. Occasionally there will be a fluid swelling around the lower joint in the leg – this should not be painful and will go in 1-2 weeks.

Checkups:

It is common to perform review radiographic exams (follow-up xrays) 4-8 weeks after the initial surgery. We take an x-ray to check that the bone is healing. This is typically done under sedation, so it is important you're your pet arrives in the morning having not received any breakfast. Dinner the night before is no problem, and water can be provided until you travel to see us.

Diet and toileting behavior:

Continue with your usual diet, you may want to consider a reduction in food intake (by 10-20% of normal volume fed) to account for the reduced activity post operatively.

It is VERY COMMON for pets not to defecate (poo) regularly for the first 1-2 weeks. Do not be concerned if your pet has not toileted up to 7 days after surgery. Please contact us if there has been no defecation after 7 days or no urination after 24 hours.

All patients should make steady week by week progress in using the operated leg.

Please contact us if:

- You believe your pet is becoming more uncomfortable
- Your pet is quiet or not interested in food
- There is discharge from the wound

If you have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact our surgeons.

Kind regards,

Drs

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