

General information for post operative care for orthopaedic surgery for cats

It is very important to the success of the surgery, that post operative instruction is followed. The most critical aspect of this is restriction post operatively which for a cat, will mean crate restriction.

First 1-2 weeks post operatively:

Surgical site - This will need to be protected from interference from your pet to minimise complications. This means that a buster collar will need to be worn for the duration of time that the skin needs to heal (10 days).

We recommend cold and warm compress from a pain relieving and healing perspective:

- 3 days cold compress – a cold pack wrapped in a thin towel to protect the skin, to be applied over the surgical site for 10 minutes three times a day, for 3 days.
- 3 days warm compress – a warm pack wrapped in a thin towel to protect the skin, to be applied over the surgical site for 10 minutes three times a day, for 3 days.

Post operative check - 3 days post operatively to check the surgical site and 10 days post operatively to remove skin sutures, or check the surgical site if there are no skin sutures present.

Medication - This will be detailed on a separate post operative discharge sheet but will involve:

- 5 day course of antibiotics.
- Non Steroidal Anti-inflammatories (NSAID) for 2-4 weeks.
- Paracetamol for approximately 5 days.
- Gabapentin may also be dispensed.

Exercise - STRICT rest which means crate rest. This needs to be large enough to allow for a soft flat bed, a litter tray, plus food bowls. When changing the litter tray or food and water bowls, keep all doors and windows shut to minimise the risk of escape!

2-6 weeks post operatively:

Surgical site - this should be healed if there have been no complications.

Post operative checks - only necessary if there are any problems or issues – always contact your primary vet if you are concerned about anything, especially if your pet is suddenly lame when previously there has been good progress.

Medication - This should have all stopped aside from possibly some NSAID.

Exercise – Continuation of STRICT rest as detailed above.

Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy can be considered at this point to help to maintain muscle mass and allow for controlled weight bearing and encourage healing. Please contact your practice to find out your nearest centre.

6-8 weeks post operatively:

Radiographs (X-rays) will need to be taken at this point unless otherwise stated, to check for healing prior to exercise re-introduction.

Return to exercise

This will involve your cat to be allowed out of the crate in a controlled manner. Initially, this will mean supervised time out of the crate, building up to room rest, then house rest, then being allowed out again (if your cat is an outdoor cat).

A guide protocol is as follows:

- Supervised time out of the crate for 10 minutes three times a day for 5 days. No jumping onto furniture or window sills.
- Supervised time out of the crate for 15 minutes three times a day for 5 days. No jumping onto furniture or window sills.
- Supervised time out of the crate for 20 minutes three times a day for 5 days. Some jumping onto furniture or window sills allowed.
- Supervised time out of the crate for 25 minutes three times a day for 5 days. Some jumping onto furniture or window sills allowed.
- Supervised time out of the crate for 30 minutes three times a day for 5 days. Some jumping onto furniture or window sills allowed.
- One room rest for 1 week.
- House rest for 2 weeks.
- Return to normal activity.

Removal of surgical implants

Generally, surgical implants will remain in place and we will not need to remove them. There may be times where removal is necessary, this can include:

- External skeletal fixators which have been placed to immobilise bones and/or joints to allow for fracture healing or to support a surgical site and allow healing.
- Implants placed in very immature animals occasionally have to be removed to minimise the effect on bone growth.
- If soft tissue irritation occurs due to the presence of an implant.
- If infection occurs post operatively.