

General information for post operative care for orthopaedic surgery for dogs

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.

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.

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.

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.

Exercise - STRICT rest – generally this means crate rest is possible, but we realise this is not possible for some of our larger patients. It is essential that strict rest entails nothing more than being in a restricted space (that allows for a soft flat bed plus food bowls), with toileting on the lead only in the garden. It is important that there is:

- No interaction/play with other pets
- No off the lead exercise in the garden as this can allow for sudden acceleration to chase something.
- No access to skiddy floors that can throw the patient off balance/cause them to skid over.
- No going on/off furniture
- No going up/down stairs.

A few steps up/down into the garden is fine as long as this is controlled or supported (using a sling or towel).

2-6 weeks post operatively:

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

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

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.

Exercise - Continuation of STRICT rest as detailed above. It should no longer be necessary to help your dog with a few steps into or out of the garden.

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 need to be done in a controlled manner in 5-minute increments:

- 10 minutes three times a day on the lead for 5 days
- 15 minutes three times a day on the lead for 5 days
- 20 minutes three times a day on the lead for 5 days
- 25 minutes three times a day on the lead for 5 days
- 30 minutes three times a day on the lead for 5 days
- 35 minutes three times a day on the lead for 5 days
- 40 minutes three times a day on the lead for 5 days

At this point it is fine to start to allow some off the lead exercise. This will also need to be in a controlled manner and we would recommend that it is done mid-way through the lead exercise to allow for appropriate warm up/warm down. Again, do this in 5-minute increments so:

- 15 minutes lead, 5 minutes off the lead, 20 minutes lead for 5 days
- 15 minutes lead, 10 minutes off the lead 15 minutes lead for 5 days
- 15 minutes lead, 15 minutes off the lead, 15 minutes lead for 5 days
- 10 minutes lead, 20 minutes off the lead, 10 minutes lead for 5 days

From here, exercise can resume as normal.

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.
- An Internal skeletal fixator which has been placed to immobilise a joint to support a surgical site and allow healing e.g. calcaneo-tibial screw with Achilles rupture repair.
- 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.