Exploratory Arthrotomy Surgical Consent Form

Your pet has been diagnosed with a swollen stifle joint. Although there are many different causes of stifle swelling, the most common things we see in dogs are partial or total tears of the anterior cruciate ligament, meniscal tears, and OCD lesions of the lateral femoral condyle. Less common causes include immune mediated diseases, severe strains, collateral ligament trauma, caudal cruciate tears, infection, and hemorrhage. Radiographs only show bone lesions and some soft tissue changes but most of these problems can only be diagnosed by surgical exploration, arthroscopy (scope), and MRI. Since almost all cases of joint swelling require surgical repair and since most of these diagnostic tests are expensive, many times we simply do an exploratory and skip pre-operative testing. Although a thorough exploration of the joint will be undertaken today, there are some conditions that will not be readily apparent during surgery. If the surgeon is unable to determine the cause of your pet’s swelling during surgery, further tests may be necessary to fully determine the nature of your pet’s condition including biopsies of tissues taken during the surgery or an MRI. After fully discussing the planned surgical procedure and associated risks with your doctor or the surgeon, please sign the consent for surgery below:

The undersigned owner or authorized agent of admitted patient _____________________ hereby authorizes the admitting veterinarian (and his/her designated associates or assistants) to administer such treatment as is necessary to perform the below-mentioned procedure. The nature of the procedure(s) has been explained to me and no guarantee has been made as to results or cure. I understand that there may be risk involved in these procedures. I consent to the administration of such anesthetics or tranquilizers as are necessary.

Anesthetic Risks: (Although every effort is made to make anesthesia as safe as possible including vital sign monitoring and use of the most up to date anesthetic agents and equipment, understand that anesthesia has inherent risks). The incidence of complications from anesthesia is extremely low and we do not anticipate any in your pet but on rare occasions the following can occur:

1. Allergic reaction to the anesthetic agents
2. Heart rhythm abnormalities
3. Untoward reactions to the gas including drops in blood pressure or respiratory difficulties
4. Just like in humans, on very rare occasions, general anesthesia can result in death.

We are prepared and will treat any anesthetic reactions if they occur, but general anesthesia is never completely without risk, just like driving a car.

I consent to the following surgical procedure(s): Exploratory Arthrotomy

Surgical Risks Include:

1. Infection (less than 3%) which may require additional testing and medication at an additional cost.
2. Blood clots that can lodge in major organs causing stroke or rarely death.
3. Artificial ligament rupture if ligament disease is found and repaired (especially if your pet is
overactive).
4. Advancing arthritis that makes the joint stiff and sore, especially after exercise or in cold weather.
5. Nerve Injury (extremely rare) which can be temporary or permanent.
6. Allergic reaction to the suture material utilized in ligament repair.
7. A non-diagnostic arthrotomy necessitating further testing.

Strict adherence to post-surgical care and medicating of your pet will minimize these potential complications and serious problems are very uncommon in most cases.

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Date | Pet Owner/Agent Signature | Phone I Can Be Reached At Today
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Optional Epidural Consent

In addition to the injectable pain medications that are routinely used for orthopedic surgery (morphine, local anesthetics and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications) you may request and authorize additional pain control for your pet. Multi-modal pre-emptive pain control is the best way to keep your pet as comfortable as possible during and after orthopedic surgery.

Epidurals are routinely used in human medicine for lower extremity surgery and obstetrics and are now being utilized by many veterinary orthopedic surgeons for our patients as well. Local anesthetics help stop pain stimulus at the surgical site. Morphine acts on the brain to lessen the sensation of surgical pain and anti-inflammatories help control the chemicals that create long term local pain. An epidural acts on the remaining pathway of pain by “numbing” the spinal cord nerves directly by bathing them in morphine and sometimes a low dose of local anesthetic. This injection will usually provide exquisite pain control for up to twenty four hours. In addition, patients that have had epidurals require less anesthetic agents during the procedure which enhances safety.

Complications are extremely rare with epidurals in people and in animals. The worst side affect is an infection in the spinal canal but this is very unlikely since we clip the hair and do a surgical scrub over the area before performing the injection with surgical gloves and a sterile spinal needle and one time use Duramorph ampules (preservative free morphine). Occasionally your pet can also experience itching over the injection site, urinary retention, or transient rear leg weakness, all of which are temporary. Extremely rare complications include damage to the nerve roots, bleeding into the spinal canal, or inadvertent damage to nearby structures. In experienced hands, epidurals are extremely safe and effective. There is no pain from this procedure as the epidural is done after your pet is anesthetized.

The cost for an epidural is $50.00 (in addition to the surgical estimate you have already authorized) which covers the cost of the sterile gloves, preparation, spinal needle, preservative free morphine specially made for spinal injection, and occasionally preservative free Marcaine (local anesthetic).

Please sign the authorization below circling whether you do or do not want your pet to have an
epidural. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me before surgery.

I DO / DO NOT authorize you to perform an epidural on my pet to help control surgical pain.

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