Post Surgical Care of Complex Pelvic Fracture Surgery

Home patient care after orthopedic surgery is critical to the success of the surgery. Allowing your pet too much activity may alter the anticipated outcome of the surgery. The following instructions will be your guide to home care. Your surgeon has determined that due to the extent of the injuries to your pet’s pelvis and the stability and strength of the repair procedure that your pet’s best chance for a full recovery requires absolute strict confinement for at least four weeks. People with similar injuries are often confined to a bed for many months and not allowed to move even to go to the restroom.

**General Exercise and Activity Restrictions:**
Your pet should be confined for a minimum of 4 weeks following the surgery.

**Few Activities are allowed during this time:**

1. The patient is to be left in a traveling kennel or exercise pen or small room/bathroom at all times when not under your direct supervision. Never put the patient in an outside run, patio or free in backyard.
2. The patient is under the direct supervision of the owner on a short, tight leash while outside for sunning or elimination's and their weight supported with a towel or leash under belly in front of their rear legs. Carry your pet in and out of the house!

**Activities That Are Not Permitted:**

1. No Free Activity (playing, jumping, running or long strenuous walks).
2. No Stairs
3. No outdoor pet runs or "Doggie Doors".
4. No slippery floors (tile, linoleum or wood)
5. No general confinements (garage, patio, bathroom, porch, laundry room, bedroom or kitchen) without a kennel.

**Note:** Most pets do very well with the 4-week confinement restriction. However if your pet is difficult to control or has an exceeding amount of energy, the use of small amounts of a tranquilizer may be necessary to help during this confinement period. If you cannot control your pet or you cannot take care of your pet post-operatively it may be better to board your pet with your veterinarian for the first 3 weeks after surgery.
Other Post Operative Instructions

1. Sutures or Staples are removed in ten days. Use all medications as directed.
2. Licking at the incision should be discouraged because it may lead to chewing at the sutures or staples causing a wound infection. It may be necessary to bandage the leg or use an Elizabethan collar to prevent licking.
3. Bandages and splints should always be kept dry and clean. Any odors and/or persistent licking are indicators that there may be a potential problem and should be checked by your veterinarian immediately. Bandages and splints should be checked weekly by your veterinarian or veterinary technician.
4. Feed your pet its regular diet but reduce it by 10% to allow for reduced activity.
5. Mild swelling may occur near the incision or low on limbs. Your veterinarian should check moderate or severe swelling immediately.
6. Progress radiographs are usually taken between 3-4 weeks after surgery and again 3-4 weeks after that to be sure the fracture is healing properly.

Resuming Activity

Resuming full activity and exercise will be determined in most cases by the radiographs taken at 4 weeks after the surgery. Unless instructed otherwise, follow your pet’s individual rehabilitation program. Recheck immediately if your pet suddenly starts using their legs less than before.

Expected Results

Orthopedic patients heal in about 2-4 months for most bone surgeries and slightly longer for soft tissue problems such as ligaments and tendons. Most patients will return to controlled activity in 2 months and full activity in 3-4 months. Most athletic pets will return to full function in 6 months.

Complications

As with any surgical procedure, complications can occur. Unlike human patients who can use a sling or crutches, our patients do not know enough to stay off a healing broken bone so restricted activity is a major responsibility of you, the pet owner. Failure to follow these instructions carefully can lead to delayed healing, broken implants, loose implants, or even re-fracture of the bone which leads to costly second surgeries.

The most common complication is delayed healing, where, despite our best efforts to reduce and stabilize the fracture, individual patients respond slower than others. In other cases, the bone may refuse to heal and require additional procedures like bone grafting. Infections are quite uncommon in veterinary orthopedic surgery, but when they do occur they can markedly affect the ability of the bone to heal. Nerve damage can occur but it is usually temporary. Sacral fractures have a higher chance for permanent damage to the tail, rectum and bladder.
The healing of a fracture is a race between the implants failing, as all metal does, and the bone healing. Thankfully, the bone healing wins this race in almost all the cases we encounter with cooperative owners. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask your veterinarian.

**Follow Up Instructions:**

- Please monitor your pet’s ability to urinate over the next 1-2 days. Rarely, patients that had an epidural will have transient urinary retention, straining to urinate but no stream is observed. This can lead to a ruptured bladder after several days and kidney failure if you do not seek immediate treatment.
- Recheck in ten days: Sutures/Staples removal / Dissolving sutures
- Recheck every 2 weeks after suture removal to evaluate progress
- Tegaderm clear bandage can be left on until it falls off or at suture removal
- Start antibiotic tonight
- Start pain medication tonight
- Start Dasuquin, Cosequin, or Glycoflex (joint supplement) ASAP
- Start essential fatty acid supplement, ie. Derm Caps to reduce joint inflammation ASAP
- Call Rod Newman, MS, CCRP to schedule your initial physical therapy consultation at 615-414-4867 or email him at rnewman@caninerehabnashville.com (cost included in surgery fee)