



# Lone Star Veterinary Surgical Services

## Surgical Solutions for Your Loved Pets

### **Postoperative Care: Extracapsular Lateral Suture Stabilization of Cranial Cruciate Ligament Injury**

Your pet has had surgery performed that used extra-articular (outside the joint) nylon suture placed to stabilize the joint in a normal alignment. Fibrous scar tissue will also develop over time to enhance the stabilization. Your dog should not be bathed or allowed to swim until the skin sutures are removed. The incision should appear clean and dry, with skin edges well apposed and no redness or discharge from the site evident. If excessive activity is allowed too soon following surgery, stabilization of the knee can be lost requiring additional surgery. After surgery your pet must be kept confined in a small area (kennel or a small room) for 4 weeks after surgery. No free activities are allowed. Please continue all antibiotics as directed by your veterinarian.

- Please have your pet wear an e-collar for 10-14 days to protect the skin incision.
- You will need to return to your doctor for suture removal in 10-14 days
- A physical rehabilitation consult with a certified Rehabilitation Veterinarian is recommended

#### **Immediately 72 hours post-op:**

Your pet needs your love and attention during this time. The surgery site needs time to heal as the inflammation subsides. Pain medication and mild sedation is typically used to ensure the best comfort for your pet.

An ice pack (with a cloth in between the skin and the ice pack) can be applied to the incision site 2-3 times daily for 10-15 mins. There should be no free access to stairs, jumping, running, or playing with other dogs/family members. They can be walked outside ON LEASH for 2-5 mins, 3-4x daily for toileting and “sniff breaks” only. Light massage to the muscles of the surgical leg and paw is beneficial during this time to help with fluid movement, swelling, and to prevent joint stiffness.

#### **Day 3 through 2 Weeks:**

The goal during this time is to continue pain control, increase range of motion, and encourage toe-touching when walking.

- Passive range of motion and holding the stifle (knee) in gentle flexion and extension for 10 reps 2-3 times daily. Only take the knee to a point of resistance, DO NOT force it into



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full flexion, then hold in that position for 5 seconds. This should not be painful, and the range should increase as recovery progresses.

- Continue slow, controlled leash walking for 5-10 mins, 3-4 times daily. Only walk your dog to the point of early fatigue. If at any time your pet appears weak (limb shaking or disuse of the limb) or tired, you should revert to the last distance/activity which it could tolerate without these symptoms and hold there for a few days before once again trying to increase the activity level again. Shorter more frequent walks are more beneficial than a single long walk.
- Perform “cookie stretches”: Have your pet stand facing you. Using a treat or favorite toy, have the dog follow the object, turning the head and neck to the side of surgery. Move the treat slowly to the shoulder, then hip, then rear paw. Hold in each position for 3-5 seconds, 5 times, 2-3 times daily. This should encourage gradual weight bearing on the surgical hind paw.

#### **2 - 4 weeks postoperatively:**

The goal is to achieve consistent weight bearing

- You can increase the leash walks to 3-4 times daily, adding 5 mins duration every week. Again, monitor for any signs of fatigue or weakness.
- 3 legged stands can be used to help encourage early weight bearing. Have your pet stand directly in front of you. While supporting them to prevent any falling, gently lift the front paw of the leg that is diagonal from their surgical leg, off the ground slightly. Hold for 3-5 seconds and then place it back on the ground. You should see your pet shift their weight slightly to their hind limbs. As your pet gets stronger, you can increase the time and height you hold the limb up and then progress to elevating the non-surgical hind limb.

#### **4 – 6 weeks postoperatively:**

- Sit-to-stand exercise can be started at this time. This will help strengthen the hip and stifle muscles and work to improve the hind limbs range of motion actively. Have your pet sit in front of you for a few seconds then have your dog stand, take a step forward and then sit again. Start with 5 reps twice daily and increase the reps by 5 weekly. The goal at the end of 6 weeks will be for your pet to sit as squarely as possible, with their legs directly under them. No “slopy sitting”!



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- Slow and controlled stair climbing can be started as an exercise. Only use a small flight of 5-10 stairs up and down 2-3 times daily. Walking up an incline can also achieve similar strengthening if stairs are unavailable. Be sure to go slow and encourage use of all 4 limbs without any hopping.

#### 6 – 12 weeks postoperatively:

- If the knee is stable and your pet is using the limb consistently, then they may be confined to one room in the house when you are away. It may have free walk of the house when you are home (no unsupervised stairs. If your pet is active and runs to the doorbell (and slips on the tile/linoleum) it needs to be confined to one room with good footing.
- During your leash walks, you can add obstacles like uneven surfaces, hills, stepping over low objects, and walking in circles or figure eights to increase hind limb strength and improve proprioception.
- At 8 weeks your pet may have free roam of the house and a small backyard area. No off-leash running, jumping, ball playing, etc. is allowed. Again, if at any time your pet appears weak (limb shaking) or tired, you should revert to the last distance/activity which it could tolerate without these symptoms and hold there for 1 week before once again trying to increase the activity level.
- At 12 weeks postoperatively, if your pet is using the surgical limb normally off-leash activity can be progressed by walking, trotting, jogging, and ultimately running. No balls, frisbees, dog parks, or heavy activity is allowed for 6 months post-operatively.

It will, on the average, take a minimum of 12 weeks for your pet to use the operated leg normally. During this period of rehabilitation, it is not unusual for your pet to strain its muscles or stretch the scar tissue that has newly formed in the operative site, causing lameness. This lameness is typically rapid in onset and gradually gets better over 3-5 days. Treatment with nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (Carprofen, Previcox, etc.) is appropriate during these episodes. Be sure to contact your veterinarian to ensure that your pet will be receiving the proper dose prior to giving any medication and that is safe for them to be on long term!!

If your pet does not have consistent weight bearing on the operated leg by 6 weeks after surgery, or if you have concerns, you should schedule a recheck appointment with your



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veterinarian. This will help determine if there are any complications and help us take the proper steps to correct the problem if needed. If you have any questions or problems during your pet's rehabilitation, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you for letting Lone Star Surgical Specialists take care of you and your pet!