

## ACL DISCHARGE INFORMATION

Your pet has just undergone major surgery on their knee. It is normal for them to experience some pain and discomfort throughout the next several days and weeks. Providing appropriate care during this time is crucial to their recovery. Please read this document carefully and in its entirety.

**Anesthetic:** Your pet received anesthetic for their procedure, which can cause sleepiness and/or nausea for up to 24-36 hours. Let us know if your pet shows signs of lethargy or lack of appetite for more than a couple of days. Normal coughing will occur since your pet had a trach tube placed for anesthetic.

**Medications:** Please follow medication instructions exactly as prescribed, and finish the entire course. Even if your pet does not seem to “need” their medication, it is important to administer it as instructed.

- Before taking your pet home after surgery, make sure you understand how to give them their medicine and what tools are required for dispensing them. Always use the measuring equipment provided, not your own measuring spoons or syringes.
- If you miss a dose, **do not double up on the next dose**. Resume the appropriate dosage schedule with the next treatment. Placing your pet’s medication in a plastic pillbox imprinted with the days of the week can help you avoid missing or doubling a dose. This is especially helpful if more than one person in your household is responsible for caring for your pet.
- **Do not give your pet any medications or supplements** without discussing it with your veterinarian. Human medications like aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin), and acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be toxic to animals and may be fatal if given to cats.
- Many **liquid medications must be kept refrigerated**. Gently roll in your hand or shake them to remix prior to giving to your pet. If a medication that requires refrigeration is left unrefrigerated, please contact our office to find out whether it is safe to give to your pet or needs to be replaced.
- **Do not crush or cut tablets** unless instructed to do so. Crushed tablets can taste bitter and sometimes make it difficult to determine how much the patient has ingested.

**Elizabethan Collar (E-Collar):** If your pet begins to lick the incision area, let us know immediately. Please keep the collar on your pet at all times. They can eat, drink, go outside, and sleep with it on.

**Incision:** Monitor the incision(s) for excessive redness, swelling, bruising, draining, and if the area is painful. If needed, clean the area using warm water or saline. Sutures will need to be removed by the veterinary team 10-14 days post-surgery. Your veterinarian will advise you on this. Contact us right away if you notice any signs of infection or if any sutures appear loose or missing.

**Activity (0-30 Days):** Strict confinement is required for the first four weeks following surgery. No activities are allowed during this time. These restrictions are necessary to allow the knee to heal well and provide long-term stabilization.

- Attempt to keep your pet on non-slip surfaces. Keep them from jumping on and off furniture, and do not allow them to play with other dogs. Place an ice pack on the leg for five minutes two to three times per day for the first three days at home. Then, switch to a warm pack.
- When you are not home or are unable to supervise, it is best to keep your pet in a crate or kennel.
- You may take your pet outside on a short leash to go to the bathroom and on very short (5-minute) controlled walks. No other activities, like running, jumping, or climbing stairs, are allowed. Prolonged walks are not allowed.

**No unrestricted/off-leash or unsupervised activities are allowed for four weeks!**

Provide all medications as prescribed. If you feel that your pet becomes suddenly painful, has an abrupt change in limb use, or is experiencing side effects from medication, please contact us.

**Activity (30-60 Days):** All activities remain restricted, and your pet must be kept on a leash.

- Begin increasing walks by 5-10 minutes each week, getting to 20-30 minutes once or twice per day. Always keep your dog on a leash during these walks.
- Incorporate exercises daily:
  - Sits (Up and Down): Two to three sets of 10
  - Passive Range of Motion: One set of 10 reps per day
- Begin controlled stairs and incline therapy two to three times per day

**No unrestricted/off-leash or unsupervised activities are allowed during days 30-60!**

### **COMMON CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- A decreased appetite typically is not a concern in the first few days after surgery. If your pet is not eating or drinking 24 hours after returning home, though, notify your veterinarian. Fresh water should always be available.
- Except for emergencies, pets are not fed for at least part of the day of and/or before surgery. As a result, many will not have a bowel movement for 1 to 2 days after coming home. This timeframe usually is not a cause for concern. If your pet does not produce stool for more than 2 days after returning home, please call us.
- Some incontinence after surgery is not unusual, and it should not last long.
- Hold off on bathing your pet until after the sutures are out and your veterinarian has given permission for bathing.
- E-collars are to be kept on at all times.

**If your pet needs veterinary attention following their procedure, please contact us right away. If we are not open, please reach out to one of our emergency contacts.**