



POST OPERATIVE CARE

Instructions for Post Fracture Repair (Plate and Screws)

Your dog/cat has had surgery to repair a broken bone using an internal plate and screws.

The aims of fracture repair are:

1. To restore bone and joint alignment.
2. To provide rigid immobilisation of the bone ends so that callus can form to heal the fracture.
3. To accurately align joint surfaces in cases of joint fracture

In the case of internal fixation, a bone plate and screws have been used to hold the fractured bone ends in correct alignment whilst the broken bone heals.



Xray of a fracture fixed with plate and screws

It is important to realise that although an internal plate and screws is a strong repair, the bone ends are not welded together, and if your pet is over active in the early weeks after surgery, complications can occur which can lead to repeat surgery.

The main complications associated with this procedure are:

1. Metal work failure
2. Infection
3. Delayed/non union
4. Implant loosening

The following guidelines aim to reduce post operative complications to the absolute minimum. Paying strict attention to these guidelines will ensure your dog gets the best surgical outcome possible.

- 1. Metal work failure:** Excessive load on the metal construct in the early stages of healing can lead to breakage of either the plate or the screws that secure the plate to the bone. This is more likely to occur if your dog is overactive e.g., running, jumping climbing stairs etc. Please follow the exercise regime outline below to ensure a smooth recovery from surgery.



2. Infection: We have taken exceptional care at surgery to limit the exposure of the wound to environmental bacteria. This care needs to be continued for the first 2 weeks after surgery to reduce contamination of the wound. This means taking care to prevent your dog/cat licking the surgical site. A buster collar will be provided. Your dog/cat will also be prescribed 7 days of antibiotic tablets, it is important that this course of tablets is completed and no doses are missed.

3. Delayed/Non Union: This can occur despite all efforts by the surgeon and owner to achieve a good outcome. Common causes for this are compromise to the blood supply to the fractured bone ends or infection both of which can prevent bone healing progressing at the usual rate. In some cases, this just means that extra time is taken during the rehabilitation process to get your pet back to normal exercise. In the worst-case scenario, additional surgery may be required in the case of non union where the fracture has failed to heal despite best efforts. If this occurs, Tom will discuss all aspects of why the problem may have occurred, how it is going to be managed and what you can do to try to ensure a good outcome.

4. Implant loosening: In some cases the metal work can come loose in the future. This can cause a weeping wound over the implant/surgical site. If this occurs, it is very simple to remove this metal work to resolve the problem.

Exercise Program Post Surgery:

0-14 days: For dogs - Exercise on a lead in the garden only for toilet purposes. Confinement to a cage or small room with non slip floor at all other times. During this time, a reduction in food intake may be required to prevent weight gain. Stairs are out of bounds and running and jumping strictly prohibited. For cats – cage confinement for 2 weeks with short periods of supervised gentle exercise in a carpeted room.

2-8 weeks post surgery: For dogs - Start with 10-15 minute lead walks two or three times a day. Encourage weight bearing by walking slowly to begin with. Increase the time on the lead by 5 minutes per walk per week. Hydrotherapy (if appropriate) can start at 4 weeks post surgery. Carpeted stairs can be attempted 6 weeks post surgery. Slippery floors must be avoided for 6 weeks post surgery. For cats – room confinement until 6 weeks post surgery with no access to high furniture (wardrobes etc) so they can't attempt to jump into high places.

8-12 weeks post surgery: For dogs - Long lead walks with some time on a flexible/extendible lead. Xrays are taken at 12 weeks post surgery to assess the fusion process and further recommendations on appropriate exercise are made after seeing those xrays. For cats – from 6 weeks post surgery they can be confined to the house. They can return to outside activities if all is well from 12 weeks post surgery.

Contact your vet if any of the following occur:

1. Sudden deterioration in limping and or pain.
2. Wound interference/infection
3. Excessive swelling/heat or discharge from the operation site.