

## **Post-operative Information: Shoulder OCD**

Your pet has had shoulder surgery with removal of abnormal cartilage and bone secondary to osteochondritis dessicans (OCD). The defect on the joint surface will fill-in with new cartilage very similar to the cartilage that normally covers the joint; the surface will again be smooth and the joint pain-free. Some patients will develop degenerative joint disease (DJD; “arthritis”) very slowly over time, although this does not appear to be a significant cause of lameness in these patients. Patients generally return to normal leg performance after the healing period.

### **ACTIVITY RESTRICTION x 6 weeks**

- Please keep your pet in a comfortable, safe indoor location with no free access to stairs for the initial 24 hours following the procedure. Your pet may be groggy for the first few days. He or she may whine or appear more anxious than usual; this may indicate pain/discomfort or side-effects of the medications. Please call your veterinarian for assistance with medication adjustments or return for exam and additional pain medications as needed.
- Minimal, supervised access to stairs is recommended for 4 weeks. Use baby gates, etc. to prevent free access to stairs during this restricted period.
- Please use a short, hand-held leash when outside to urinate/defecate. Confine your pet to a small area/room/crate when unattended. Please do not allow your pet to run, jump or play during this restriction period.
- Use a sling under the chest/armpits if needed during the first 7-10 days to assist and prevent falling on slippery surfaces.
- Your pet should start touching his/her toes down within the first week. Thereafter, leg use should steadily improve. If you notice a sudden deterioration or your pet stops using the leg(s) at any time after surgery, please call your veterinarian for advice.
- Your pet will feel like using the leg(s) normally before the cartilage defect is well healed. Please continue the restriction during this difficult time when he/she is feeling “too” well!

### **INCISION CARE**

- Please look at the incision twice daily. It should be dry and only slightly red along the margins; the edges will have subtle swelling. Over several days, it should lose redness and swelling. Problems to have evaluated by your veterinarian: discharge, gapping, or excessive swelling.
- It is not uncommon for a seroma to develop under the incision; this is a pocket of normal tissue fluids that develops in a high motion area such as the shoulder joint. If the swelling is smaller than a plum, please monitor. Warm compresses applied to the area will encourage the fluid to reabsorb more quickly (3-7 days.) If the seroma progressively enlarges, please have your veterinarian assess the problem.
- Do not allow your pet to lick or chew the incision. Dogs tend to want to lick early in the healing period and this can compromise the incision and predispose to infection. During the first 2 weeks, please use an E-collar or put a T-shirt on your dog to prevent incision damage, if you must leave your pet unattended.

## DIET

- Ideally, keep your pet on the thin side of normal his/her whole life. Any orthopedic condition can progress with arthritis over time with excessive, wear & tear; carrying less body weight will relieve some of this stress from the shoulder (and other) joints. Good parameters to monitor body condition are:
  - 1) you should be able to feel the ribs and pelvic bones, but not see them;
  - 2) your pet should have an "hour glass" figure when viewed from above looking down;
  - 3) your pet should have a tucked up belly when viewed from the side.
- Glucosamine/chondroitin supplements might have some beneficial effects in these cases, but this has not been clearly established. You and your primary care veterinarian should discuss whether or not these products would be helpful for your pet.

**PHYSICAL THERAPY REGIMEN** (We can also recommend professional physical therapy assistance in the Twin Cities. Studies have shown that a formal program can decrease post-operative recovery time. Please let your veterinarian know if you are interested in a referral.)

- Our lives are often very busy, so if you must err, err on the "do less" side of these instructions. Less physical therapy will result in a slower return to function, but more aggressive physical therapy by a non-professional too early may result in poor recovery.
- *Week 1:* Apply ice packs (wrapped in thin cloth) to incision area twice daily for 10-15 minutes. Baggies of frozen peas work well for this, or make an ice pack by freezing 2 parts isopropyl alcohol to one part water in a ziplock bag. Continue 5 days.
- *Week 2:* Range of Motion Exercise- Have your pet lie on his/her good side. Apply a warm compress to the shoulder, and hold with one hand. Hold the elbow with the other hand. Slowly and gently push the arm backward into full flexion of shoulder; hold for 5 seconds. Slowly pull the arm forward into full extension of the shoulder; hold for 5 seconds. Repeat this motion 15-20 times slowly once to twice daily. This exercise should not be performed to the point of pain or resentment. Continue 4 weeks.
- *Weeks 3-6:* Swimming is wonderful rehabilitation exercise when performed correctly. You may allow controlled swimming after week 2. Controlled swimming requires that your pet not jump or leap into the water; walking into the water until it is deep enough to swim is required. Throwing balls to fetch often results in sudden jumping and lunging, which can cause serious problems in the healing phase. Do not over extend your pet; start with short excursions (5 minutes) and increase duration and frequency gradually. Do not exceed once daily swimming until week 6.

## PROGRESS EXAM

- Please make an appointment to see your veterinarian in 10-14 days for a progress exam. Shoulder function will be assessed at this time, any sutures will be removed, and questions regarding physical therapy can be addressed.

## LONG TERM LIFESTYLE

- The prognosis for dogs treated surgically for shoulder OCD is considered good to excellent. The majority of dogs return to a normal gait, level of activity, and endurance. Following the 6 week recovery period, there are no recommended limitations to their lifestyle.