

Home Care Information: Hindquarter injuries requiring “bed rest” for recovery

Your pet has had a significant injury that requires confinement and inactivity during the healing period. This period of recovery is often difficult for you and your pet, but time will improve the situation. Soft tissues and bone will begin to stabilize in the first two weeks, but will take up to 6-8 weeks for strong healing and stability. Final function will depend upon the injuries, but the goal of this confinement is to optimize and speed the return of a pain-free, functional rearleg status.

ACTIVITY RESTRICTION x 8 weeks

- Your pet may be more groggy than usual with pain medications; within reason, this is acceptable. He/she should be able and willing to eat and interact with you. He/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.
- Please keep your pet in a small area with secure footing (baby playpen, kennel/crate, small room or penned off area with carpet) for the next ____ weeks. Thereafter, he/she may be confined to one level of the house with no free access to stairs. Use baby gates, etc. to prevent access to stairs.
- Do not allow jumping on/off furniture. Please do not allow any playing, running or jumping. For dogs, use a short leash when going outside to urinate/defecate.
- You may use absorptive pads to collect urine and feces if your pet is unable to walk early in the healing period. Wash all skin areas with a warm washcloth if soiled with urine or feces; dry well. You may use cornstarch and/or “diaper rash” ointments to prevent/reduce skin irritation.
- For the first 1-2 weeks, your pet may need assistance when walking; use a sling under his/her belly or under each rearleg (like a rock climbing harness) to support his/her weight. Continue this protective measure until he/she is very strong on all legs.
- Your pet will feel like fully using the injured limb(s) before healing is optimal. Please continue the restrictions during this difficult time when he/she is feeling "too" well! Failure to do so may cause serious healing problems.

PROGRESS EXAMS

- Return to your veterinarian in 10-14 days for a progress exam. Leg function will be evaluated, and any physical therapy questions will be addressed.
- If your pet is doing well, the next visit will be 6-8 weeks after surgery. Leg function will be evaluated, x-rays may be taken of the injury to assess healing, and physical therapy recommendations will be adjusted.
- Your pet should start using the injured limb(s) more strongly each week. By 6 weeks, he/she should be 90% recovered. If he/she suddenly deteriorates or does not appear to be progressing well enough, please return to your veterinarian for re-evaluation.

DIET

- Do not make any adjustments to your pet’s diet until he/she has resumed normal attitude, appetite, energy level and bathroom habits. In the first few days of recovery, encourage eating with supplements like meat babyfood and canned dog food as treats. Be aware that the above activity restrictions may cause

weight gain. To prevent this, you may feed 3/4 of the usual amount of food during the next 2 months. Your veterinarian will re-weigh your pet at the progress exams to monitor weight.

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 too early may result in failure of the implants and surgical repair.
- *Week 1:* Apply ice packs (wrapped in thin cloth) to the injured 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. (You may also use ice after the exercises below if your pet seems uncomfortable.)
- *Week 2:* Range of Motion Exercise-- Have your pet lie on his/her good side. Apply a warm compress to injured area. Grip the foot with one hand and slowly and gently push the foot up into flexion of all joints; hold for 5 seconds. Slowly pull the foot and push the leg down and back into full extension of all joints; hold for 5 seconds. Repeat this motion 15-20 times twice daily. This exercise should not be performed to the point of pain or resentment. Continue 4 weeks.
- *Week 7:* Active exercise (for dogs)-- Place your pet on a short leash and have him/her walk at your side. Walk outside on even/solid footing for 10 minutes twice daily. Continue 4 weeks.
- Swimming is wonderful rehabilitation exercise (for some dogs) when performed correctly. You may allow controlled swimming after week 8. 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.