

## My Written Plan for “Go to the ER now”

You are currently managing your brachycephalic-breed dog through recovery from anesthesia and surgery; these breeds are known for breathing difficulty during recovery so being prepared ahead of time is essential. The information below will help guide you in decision-making should your pet’s medical status change while s/he is home with you overnight or on the weekends at any stage during convalescence.

### WHAT SHOULD I HAVE PREPARED AHEAD OF TIME WHEN I KNOW I AM MANAGING MY PET THROUGH CONVALESCENCE AT HOME?

- Directions and phone number for ER closest to your home

Clinic:
Address:
Phone:

- Ability to move your pet

- Pet carrier/pillowcase
- Stretcher/blanket
- Assistance—who will help you put your pet in the car, who will come with you?

Name:
Phone numbers:
Name:
Phone numbers:

- Up to date medical summary, in writing

Please discuss this with your veterinary team **EACH time you pick up your pet** for at-home monitoring and basic home medical care overnight with you.

Date:
Diagnosis:
Surgical procedure:

❑ **Medication summary (current)**

Please keep a chart and **update it every time new medications are added or removed** from your pet's treatment.

❑ **Your well-considered plan for emergency life-saving decisions, quality-of-life decisions and financial decisions.** By definition, this ER visit will be during an emergency and highly stressful; think practically ahead of time about what life-saving measures and financial costs you will authorize.

- Will my pet need oxygen support?
- Will my pet need a temporary tracheostomy tube placed to support breathing?
- Will my pet need additional urgent airway surgery to improve recovery?
- Will my pet need CPR and other life-saving treatments?

### **SHOULD I CALL THE ER/ICU FACILITY FOR GUIDANCE?**

Call and alert them of your arrival and for what reason.

It is unlikely that significant guidance can be provided over the phone by ER staff; it is usually medically necessary for your pet to be examined and her/his medical summary reviewed before safe and appropriate care can be recommended. At-home assistance to a pet who cannot breathe well is usually not beneficial. **Please set your expectations for this need for an in-person visit** should you be concerned for your pet's welfare overnight.

### **WHAT ABNORMALITIES SHOULD SEND ME TO THE ER?**

- Any vomiting can be dangerous, for a postoperative brachycephalic patient

The ER provides two things for the vomiting patient: 1) evaluation for aspiration pneumonia or airway obstruction; and 2) diagnostic tests and treatment to prevent further vomiting.

- One or more hours of progressively harder breathing effort in the postoperative brachycephalic patient

The ER provides two things for the patient with labored breathing: 1) Oxygen support and additional airway support (using breathing tubes of different kinds); and 2) diagnostic tests and treatment to support the airway temporarily or permanently.

## WHAT ARE MY PET'S NORMAL VITAL SIGNS?

Learn how to collect vital signs—(*ask for a demonstration from your veterinary care team*)

Heart rate: *Too high is usually the concern.*

Small dog (up to 30lbs)

Heart rate—80-150 beats per minute

Large dog (over 30lbs)

Heart rate—40-100 beats per minute

Breathing rate and effort: *Too high and visible effort is usually the concern.*

Breathing rate—6-20 breaths per minute

Breathing effort—mouth closed, no effort. Panting can be normal or abnormal.

Temperature: *Both too low and too high are of concern.*

100.5 – 102.5F

Color: *Check both gum color and tongue color*

Gums = light pink

Tongue = dark pink

### Dangerous vital signs:

Respiratory effort—combination of the following,

*mouth open*

*lips pulling back with effort*

*abdomen sucking in with effort*

*“Darth Vader” noise*

*squeaking noise*

Temperature—*less than 99F or more than 104F*

Color—*white gums or purple-tinged tongue*

**Contact information for my primary care veterinary doctor and clinic**

<b>Veterinarian:</b>
<b>Clinic:</b>
<b>Email:</b>
<b>Phone:</b>