

## Mandibulectomy / Maxillectomy



One of the most useful and efficient ways to convey information to you about your pet is via the written word. We carefully craft these notes to give you helpful information and accurate expectations around your pet's surgical experience.

**Please read this.** *Please save it and read it during each stage of the recovery process.* Surprises make for a stressful time for everyone.

Photo and video examples may be found on our website: [www.directvetsurg.com](http://www.directvetsurg.com) in the Pet Owner Portal under "DVS Resources".

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Please keep a note of your questions as you and your pet progress thru recovery and address them to your primary care veterinary team. Our surgery group will contact your primary care team on **Day 2** (after their phone follow-up with you) and **Day 14** (after your recheck visit with them) to check in on your pet's progress and see if you have had any concerns or questions. This method will maintain continuity in care and an accurate patient medical record.

Your pet has had a portion of her/his jaw surgically removed. The nearby soft tissues have been stitched over the area to allow for rapid healing. This surgery site needs time to heal without disturbance, but the mouth is a vary active location. To "rest" the site, please remove all toys, discourage play that involves the mouth, follow instructions about mouth rinsing, and assist your pet to eat when it is feasible and helpful. Once the surgery site heals, it is likely play and eating behaviors can return to normal.

### First few days postop

#### MONITORING

Please keep your pet in a comfortable, safe, indoor location without free access to stairs for the next 24 hours as he/she recovers from anesthesia and surgery. Your pet may be groggy for the next 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 primary care veterinary team for assistance with medication adjustments or return for exam and additional pain medications as needed.

Monitor appetite and attitude. *If both do not steadily improve over the next 2-3 days, please call your primary care veterinary team or return for progress evaluation and problem-solving.*

You can expect your pet to have a bowel movement within 5 days. Some animals take longer than others depending on when they last ate prior to surgery and when they started eating after surgery. It may be abnormal in color and consistency for 2-3 days. If you have any concerns, please speak with your primary care veterinary team.

Please confirm that your pet has urinated within 24 hours of returning home. If he/she does not, or you notice any problems related to urination, please speak with your primary care veterinary team.

Closely supervise your pet's movements over the first 3-4 days when s/he will be groggy from anesthetics and pain medications. Limit activities to necessary events only (on leash/out to go to the bathroom; access to food/water.)

## MEDICATIONS

It is likely that you have been prescribed one or more medications (given by mouth) for your pet over the first 2-3wks of recovery. During the discharge appointment or shortly thereafter, please make sure you understand:

- what each medication is being used to treat,
- what side-effects may develop, and
- whether or not the medication should be refilled and continued.

## ***Week 1-2 postop***

### MONITORING

You may not be able to see your pet's incision, but if you can, please call your veterinarian if you notice:

--gapping (the edges should be exactly touching)

--discharge (other than small amount of crusting)

Some bruising is normal and bloody saliva is normal; both will resolve in 5-7 days. If this continues beyond this period, please see your primary care veterinarian for evaluation.

You may have been prescribed an antiseptic rinse. If so, please rinse your pet's mouth with the solution 2-3 times daily for 7 days. There is no need to "aim" the surgery site; to minimize resentment, work from the normal side of the mouth, lift lip and gently squirt the antiseptic into the mouth. Most of it will drip/drain out of the mouth. Allow your pet to lick and settle, then gently pat face dry as needed.

Your pet's breath may be bad for the first week; thereafter it should steadily improve. If you notice his/her breath becoming or remaining foul smelling, please see your primary care veterinarian for evaluation.

Do not allow your pet to paw or rub the incision(s); this can compromise the incision and predispose to infection. If necessary, please prevent access to the incision by using an E-collar or other devices, if you must leave your pet unattended.

#### TEST(S) PENDING

If there were any samples removed for testing, they will be submitted and results usually will be available in 5-7 days. Your primary care team will contact you with test results and make any treatment changes as needed.

#### PROGRESS EXAMS

Please return to your primary care clinic in 10-14 days for a progress exam. Surgical healing will be evaluated, sutures (if present) will be removed, additional surgical "touch up" procedures will be planned (as needed), and any questions you have will be addressed.

#### DIET

Please feed your pet only soft/canned food or well soaked kibble for the next 2 weeks to improve comfort during eating. Early in the healing period, you may need to assist by feeding small meatballs one at a time. \*\*Note that canned food is much higher in calories and fat. Reduce the amount of food you are feeding (compared to typical dry food) by one half to prevent unwanted weight gain.\*\*

Alternatively, your pet may have had a feeding tube placed to allow bypass-feeding to allow the mouth to heal and give your pet time to re-learn how to pick up food and drink. Additional information will be provided about tube maintenance and feeding protocols. Do not give anything by mouth unless and until otherwise advised.

## RESTRICTIONS

Do not allow your pet to have access to toys or other objects that s/he will carry in the mouth or chew on for 6 weeks. Failure to restrict this activity may compromise healing.

We may advise the use of a cloth muzzle to support the lower jaw and tongue during the healing process. The goal is to allow all of the tissues to heal and form scar tissue when the jaw is in proper alignment (held there by a loosely fitted muzzle). If this has been recommended, use the muzzle whenever your pet does not need her/his mouth to eat or drink. Make sure to keep up on the cleaning of the muzzle (it will get very wet and smelly quickly) and monitor your pet's face where the muzzle rests to make sure no skin irritation develops.

Avoid any rigorous activity for 2 weeks. For dogs, short, leashed walks to urinate/defecate are fine. Do not use a neck/collar restraint on walks, etc. for the first 4wks after surgery. A collar for ID purposes is ok.

Minimal, supervised/assisted access to stairs is advised while your pet is taking pain medications. Use baby gates, etc. to prevent free access to stairs during this restricted period. When navigating stairs (up and down), have a hand/leash on collar/harness and a leash/safety-strap under the belly to prevent slips, stumbles, falls.

Please use a short (~6ft), 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.

If your pet's personality-type challenges these restrictions, discuss options for medicinal-assistance for your pet to make restrictions easier to manage (i.e. Trazadone, Gabapentin, Tramadol, other).

## **Long-term lifestyle**

The prognosis for dogs treated surgically to remove a portion of the lower or upper jaw is considered good to excellent. The majority of dogs return to a near-normal eating behavior, level of activity, and comfort. The cosmetic appearance of the face improves with time as healing proceeds, hair regrows, and tongue control improves. To improve hygiene around the mouth, a simple/small mustache clipper can be used to trim long fur away from the altered lip/jaw site. Following the 6-week recovery period, there are no recommended limitations to a pet's lifestyle.

## **Checklist:**

### HOME MONITORING AND PROGRESS CHECK-IN WITH VETERINARY TEAM

- Pet attitude and appetite—Are these improving daily? What are your observations? What are your specific concerns?
  
- Pet mobility—Is this improving daily? What are your observations? What are your specific concerns?
  
- Incision health—Is redness and swelling going away? Is there ongoing nasal discharge or bloody saliva?
  
- Pet pain level—What are your observations? What are your specific concerns?
  
- Other

Based on your own experience through this, we welcome and encourage suggestions to this information that may help future patients and their people. Pay it forward! ([directvetsurg@gmail.com](mailto:directvetsurg@gmail.com))

--The DVS Crew