

My Written Plan for “Go to the ER now”

You are currently managing your postoperative Laryngeal Paralysis dog through recovery from anesthesia and surgery; these patients are known for breathing difficulty during recovery and in the future with aspiration pneumonia 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

Veterinarian:
Clinic:
Email:
Phone: