



Billings Animal Family Hospital 1321 N. 27th St Billings, MT 406-245-4772

Cranial Cruciate Repair Post-Op Care

Your dog has had a repair of a torn ligament in the knee. A successful outcome relies heavily on post-operative care. Your dog's outcome depends on the following factors:

Pre-operative disease – How much arthritis was present? Is your dog overweight? (25% of successful outcome)

Surgical Repair – Was the meniscus damaged or was it normal? Were there any intra-operative complications? (25% of successful outcome)

Post-operative Care – You must “shrink” your dog's world for 12 weeks. You must prevent your dog from licking/chewing at the incision. You must perform appropriate rehabilitation exercises and strictly follow these post-op care instructions. (50% of successful outcome)

1. Your dog will have a bandage in place when it goes home. It is very important that this bandage stay dry and protected. If the toes get wet, the bandage must be changed soon to prevent infection in the toes. We would like to leave the bandage on for 10-14 days to protect the leg and prevent the dog from licking or chewing at the incision. We will send your dog home with an E-Collar (“Lamp Shade”) which we insist you use while your dog is unsupervised. The biggest risk with this surgery is infection at the surgery site and worst case, infection within the braided suture implant. If this happens, the implant may need to be removed. Your dog will be on antibiotics for 10 days to help prevent infection.
2. Your dog's activity is limited to a crate, small pen, or short leash. Your dog should not be allowed to be outside or free in the house unsupervised and without being on a short lead, which allows you to control their movements.
3. The bandage and staples will be removed in 10-14 days. Please schedule a follow-up appointment with the doctor at this time so she can evaluate the incision and your dog's progress. After bandage removal, you will still need to keep the dog from licking or chewing at the incision. Even though the skin appears healed, dogs can still cause infection with persistent licking. This may require you to use the e-collar for a longer period of time. More antibiotics may be prescribed as well.
4. The doctor would like to schedule follow-up appointments at 4, 8 and 12 weeks post-operatively. These progress exams are to evaluate the incision, range of motion, degree of lameness and hopefully detect any problems before they become more serious.

Please follow the following exercise/rehab schedule and remember, at NO TIME during the first 12 weeks should your dog be allowed to exercise, run, or roam free unsupervised and off leash!! This is critical to the success of this surgery!

Weeks 1-2 – Your dog will be in a bandage. Multiple short walks (5-10 minute) on a short leash (2 feet). Please call if bandage becomes wet or dog has licked and exposed incision site.

Weeks 3-4 – The bandage will have been removed at the end of the 2nd week. Please continue to prevent licking at or chewing at incision area. Continue short walks (10-20 min) on a short leash (2 feet). You can gradually increase the distance and duration of these walks, but always keep the leash short and the walks controlled. Our goal is to have weight-bearing on the affected leg with each step. If the dog is allowed to go too fast, they will probably just carry the affected leg. Medical progress exam at the end of 4 weeks.

Weeks 5-6 – Continue short walks on a short leash, gradually increasing to 20-30 minutes, three times per day. Begin functional strengthening and balance exercises, 2-3 times per day. These include:

- a. Sit/Stands – 10 reps
- b. Figure 8 circles each direction at a walk
- c. Corner sit/stands, with operated leg against the wall
- d. Trotting on a longer lead in a straight line (no sharp turns or cuts)
- e. Begin balance activities on balance board, couch cushion, blow-up mattress, etc.

Weeks 7-8 – Longer leash walks, build up to 30-40 minutes, 2-3 times per day. Additional activities:

- a. Figure 8 trotting, no sharp turns
- b. Ramps – both incline and decline
- c. Ascend/Descend Stairs – 5-10 flights, slowly, 2-3 times per day
- d. Swimming (but no explosive water entry)
- e. Tug-of-War
- f. Trotting on a longer lead in a straight line (no sharp turns or cuts)
- g. Continue balance activities
- h. Medical progress exam at the end of 8 weeks.

Weeks 9-12 – Continue longer walks on a longer leash, as before. Also permitted are zig-zag trotting and running in a straight line. Continue additional activities as week 6-8. Final medical progress exam at the end of 12 weeks and hopefully permission to return to previous level of activity!

If at any time during the rehabilitation process your dog exhibits sudden, intense pain, stop the exercises and call the office. If you notice any abnormalities about the incision (redness, drainage, pain, heat), please call the office immediately. If your dog seems fatigued when you increase the level of activity, go back to the previous week's activity level for a few days.

If you have any other questions, please call: 406-245-4772