



## **Postoperative care after femoral head and neck excision**

### **Wound care:**

The incision and associated surgery site may become swollen over the next few days. Some of the swelling may move down the leg, which is normal. You may apply cold compresses for the first 48 hours after surgery. In addition you may notice bruising that becomes very dark red, and spreads out away from the skin incision. All this is normal. You should become concerned that your pet may have an infection IF:

A: the wound becomes very swollen or discharges a yellow or green material

B: your pet suddenly stops using the leg or becomes very depressed or lethargic. If these signs occur, you should contact your veterinarian

Sometimes the wound will ooze some blood during the first 24-48 hours at home. You should not be alarmed at this; you can hold a cotton sponge over it for 5-10 minutes to stop the bleeding. If necessary you can clean the wound with cotton sponges and warm water, or even a little hydrogen peroxide at the skin edges, being careful not to get it in the wound which can cause some minor irritation.

### **Exercise:**

It is extremely important that you work at re-habilitating your pet; doing so will optimize the chances of a successful outcome. This handout will outline how.

Physiotherapy: Physiotherapy following this procedure consists of gentle flexion and extension of the hip joint to maintain good range of motion. This is important because muscles around joints may undergo contracture very fast if no weight is being placed on the leg. If your pet is small (i.e. you are able to carry him/her with one hand), you should perform the physiotherapy by holding him/her in one hand, close to your body and then flexing and extending the joint in question. It is very easy to inadvertently flex and extend the joints that do not need the therapy. So make certain you are not merely bending the knee – the hip needs to move! Good physiotherapy takes time and patience. Initially the leg will be stiff and you must be gentle at first and then progressively work on increasing the range of motion. Gently flex and extend the hip for 20-30 repetitions 2-3 times a day. You may find this easiest when you are watching TV, since you can get your pet to relax easier if he/she does not think that a normal routine is being disrupted.

If your pet is larger, you will need to perform the physiotherapy outlined above, except that you will need to learn how to hold your dog on his/her side to do this. A veterinary technician or your veterinarian can show you how to do this; it usually takes one person to hold and one person to do the therapy.

Remember to praise your pet afterwards, give him/her a treat. Being patient and rewarding your pet will go a long way to helping ensure a successful outcome.

Exercise: It is very important to leash walk (dogs only) your pet to try and force him/her to use the leg again. Slow walks where you actually pull a little on the leash to slow him/her down will force the leg to be placed and result in a better outcome.

Swimming is excellent for your pet (dogs only)!! It allows for exercise without bearing weight – 7 days after surgery you may begin swims with your pet of approximately 5 minutes each day.

It is recommended that you have your veterinarian recheck your pet in 2 weeks for suture removal and to see how you are doing with the physiotherapy.

Stephen J. Van Lue, DVM, DACVS  
[svanlue@vanluevetsurg.com](mailto:svanlue@vanluevetsurg.com)