

Post-operative Information: Superficial Digital Flexor Tendon Luxation Stabilization

Your pet has had a superficial digital flexor tendon luxation surgically stabilized. The SDF tendon runs in a groove on the back surface of the heel bone and then on down to the toes. It normally is "contained" in the groove by support tissues on either side; low level trauma can result in those support tissues tearing open and allowing the tendon to jump out of its groove. When the tendon does not stay in its groove, it is painful each time the ankle is flexed and extended during walking. The technique for stabilizing is to sew the support tissues back together with strong sutures; then over time, scar tissue will come in and permanently stabilize the tendon. The majority of patients do very well after surgical stabilization, but a *small percentage of patients will have the repair fail and require additional surgery to correct.*

ACTIVITY RESTRICTION x 8 weeks

- Please keep your pet in a comfortable, safe indoor location without access to stairs for the next 24 hours as he/she recovers from anesthesia & surgery. Your pet may be groggy for the first few days. He/she may whine or appear more anxious than usual; this may indicate pain/discomfort or side-effects of the medications. Please call your veterinarian for assistance with medication adjustments, or return for exam & additional pain medications as needed.
- Confine your pet to one level/section of the house on carpeted floors. Use baby gates, etc. to prevent access to slippery floors or stairs. Do not allow jumping on/off furniture. Confine to a small area/room/crate when unattended. Please do not allow any playing, running or jumping. For dogs, use a short leash when going outside to urinate/defecate.
- Your pet will feel like fully using the leg before the knee is healed. Please continue the restriction during this difficult time when he/she is feeling "too" well! Failure to do so may cause serious healing problems.

BANDAGE CARE

A splint has been applied to the operated limb. The goal of the splint is to provide pressure to the surgical site to minimize swelling, improve patient comfort for the first few days, and support the surgical repair. Please place a plastic baggy over the foot whenever you take your pet outside to prevent soiling of the bandage; remove when indoors. If the bandage slips below the incision or becomes soiled or wet, please return for splint change within 24 hours to prevent complications.

PROGRESS EXAMS

- Return here or to your veterinarian in 7-10 days for a progress exam and splint change. Thereafter, the **splint will need to be changed every 1-2wks** for 4wks, then reduced to a soft padded bandage for 2wks, then removed.
- Your pet should start touching his/her toe down within the first 2 weeks. Thereafter, leg use should steadily improve to 90% normal at 6-8 weeks. If you notice a sudden deterioration in leg use at any time after surgery, please see your veterinarian for exam.

DIET

- Ideally, keep your pet on the thin side of normal his/her whole life. Any orthopedic condition can progress with arthritis over time due to excessive, wear & tear; carrying less body weight will relieve some of this stress from the joints. Good parameters to monitor body condition are: 1) you should be able to feel the ribs and pelvic bones, but not see them; 2) your pet should have an "hour glass" figure when viewed from above looking down; 3) your pet should have a tucked up belly when viewed from the side.
- Glucosamine/chondroitin supplements ("chondroprotectants") might have some beneficial effects in these patients to improve the environment of the tendon bursa. You and your veterinarian should discuss whether or not these products would be helpful for your pet.

LONG TERM LIFESTYLE

- After the ankle is fully healed, there are no restrictions on activities for your pet. A gradual return (over 4wks after bandage removal) to full function should occur, to allow for a smooth return of muscle function and strength following the restricted period.