

Post-operative Information: Thoracotomy

Your pet has had surgery on the chest (i.e. thoracotomy) to treat an abnormality of the lungs, heart or esophagus. The incision may be either on the side (i.e. lateral) or down the middle (i.e. sternal). These procedures can create considerable discomfort, and your pet will need some quiet time over the next several weeks to recover.

ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS

- Please keep your pet in a comfortable, safe indoor location for the next 24 hours until he/she is very steady on his/her feet. Do not allow free access to stairs.
- 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 veterinarian for assistance with medication adjustments or return for exam and additional pain medications as needed.
- Avoid any rigorous activity for 4 weeks. For dogs, short, leashed walks to urinate/defecate are fine.
- When you get home, count your pet breathing rate (breaths per minute); this can be your baseline for comparison. If he/she is having any significant problems in the chest, the breathing rate will steadily rise and stay high. Please call if you notice this change, or if your pet looks distressed with breathing.
- Monitor appetite and attitude. *If both do not steadily improve over the next 2-3 days*, please call your primary care veterinarian 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 veterinarian.
- 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 veterinarian.

INCISION CARE

- Please look at the surgical incision twice daily. It should be dry, slightly red along the margins, and slightly swollen/thick on the edges. Over several days, it should lose redness and swelling.
- Problems to call your veterinarian about:
 - gapping (the edges should be exactly touching)
 - discharge (other than small amount of crusting)
 - swelling (other than slightly raised skin near edges).Some bruising is normal and will resolve in 5-7 days.

- It is not uncommon for a seroma to develop under the incision; this is a pocket of normal tissue fluids that develops in a high motion area such as the side of the chest near the front leg and the underside of the chest where it contacts the ground (when lying down). If the swelling is smaller than a plum, please monitor. Warm compresses applied to the area will encourage the fluid to reabsorb more quickly (3-7 days.) If the seroma progressively enlarges, please have your veterinarian assess the problem.

TESTS PENDING

- If there were any tissues were removed for biopsy analysis, they will be submitted and results will be available in 5-7 days. Your veterinarian will contact you with test results and will make any treatment changes as needed.

PROGRESS EXAMS

- Please return to your primary care veterinarian in 10-14 days for a progress exam. Skin healing will be evaluated, sutures will be removed, and any questions you have will be addressed.
- Other progress exams:

ADDITIONAL NOTES
