

Post-operative Information: Perianal or Rectal Surgery

Your pet has had surgery to correct or remove an abnormality associated with the anus (“perianal” = around the anus) or the rectum. The goal of the surgery is to eliminate the abnormality without creating significant, additional defecation (“pooping”) problems. The nerves and muscles that allow the anus to function properly can be temporarily disturbed or permanently damaged by any surgical manipulation in the perianal region. It is quite common for pets to experience at least temporary stool incontinence (i.e. dropping stool unintentionally); for most patients, this improves with time. For other patients, this abnormality can be somewhat diminished with low fiber diets and liberal access to appropriate “bathroom” areas.

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 a 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 2 weeks. Short, leashed walks are fine.
- 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

- If one is present, please look at the incision near your pet’s anus 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.

- Do not allow your pet to lick or chew the incision. Pets tend to want to lick early in the healing period and this can compromise the incision and predispose to infection. If necessary, please use an E-collar if you must leave your pet unattended.
- Most animals are very bothered by any manipulation of these areas and often can have stool contamination of the site given their poor anal function post-operatively. It can be helpful to maintain cleanliness and ease pain and itchiness during the healing phase to treat the anus and incision areas with a room temperature, light water spray 2-3 times daily (a handheld shower head works well). Gently blot the area dry with a clean towel after the treatment.

DIET

- For the first 3-4 weeks after surgery, add fiber to your pet's diet regularly. This will increase the bulk/size of the stool, make it softer but more formed, and thus make it easier to pass when the anus/rectum still hurts from surgery. You can add oat or wheat bran to the food daily as a source of bulking fiber. Please consult with your primary care veterinarian regarding the correct amount. (Approximately 1 tsp – 1 Tbsp per meal; adjust based on size of stool and ease of passage during this healing period.)

TESTS PENDING

- If there were any tissues 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 (if present) will be removed, and any questions you have will be addressed.

LONG TERM LIFESTYLE

- Patients who have had perianal surgery may need a modified diet to assist with stool incontinence. It is usually a matter of trial-and-error to find the right choice, but in general a lower fiber diet is ideal. This lower fiber food will result in smaller amounts of stool overall, and less frequent need to pass stool. Consult with your primary care veterinarian to discuss dietary options and trials.
- In general, if your pet is stool incontinent, he/she will need more frequent access to their "bathroom" area. These patients do not "know" they have to go sometimes, so dropping a small stool while walking or when sleeping is common and is NOT a sign of a loss of "potty training". Animals should not be scolded or punished for these occurrences; they cannot avoid them given their abnormal anal function post-operatively.
- Even with some degree of stool incontinence, patients can live relatively normal lives with just a small degree of accommodation from their human family members.