Post Operative Care- Cranial Cruciate Ligament Surgery

Your dog has had a procedure called an extra capsular repair to repair his/her torn cranial cruciate ligament (CCL). You may have heard this ligament referred to as the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL). This is the term used in people and is the same structure as the CCL in dogs. The following list is a brief description of the restrictions, care and what to expect post-operatively. If, however, this is unclear or you have any questions please feel free to contact us to speak with Dr. Mann at (732) 422-7500.

1. **Pain Management**
   Post-operatively you will be giving two (2) medications, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug and an opioid (NSAID). Please give as directed starting with the first dose the evening of discharge from the hospital. *The first dose has already been given the evening of the surgery and the second dose was giving the morning after the surgery by our technicians.*

2. **Antibiotics**
   Antibiotics are given as a prevention of post-operative infection. These are usually given for 5-7 days. If, however, your dog’s skin was inflamed or infected a longer course of antibiotics will be prescribed. Typically Cephalexin is dispensed for antibiotic prophylaxis (prevention). Please give as directed starting with the first dose the evening of discharge from the hospital. *The first and second dose has been given as stated above.*

3. **Ice**
   Icing is one of the most important things you can do to help your dog in the immediate post-operative period. It controls and decreases inflammation and will help to reduce post-operative pain. Please ice the knee 10 minutes on each side three times daily for 3 days. Ice packs can be made of ice cubes in a bag. Frozen vegetables which can be re-frozen (if they don’t become too thawed and mushy) or gel packs can be purchased from most local pharmacies.

4. **Bruising**
   There will be bruising around the incision and down the leg. It may be red or darker. This is normal and may increase for up to 2 days after surgery and then slowly resolve.

5. **Swelling**
   It is not unusual to have some swelling around the incision. It should not be excessive or fluid filled. However, it is common to see swelling of the tarsus (the joint below the surgery) that develops 2-3 days after surgery. This may feel like (Jell-0). This is edema and will resolve 2-3 days after it develops.

6. **Licking**
   There is no bandage placed on the incision so there may be some bloody or blood tinged discharge for the first 24 hours after surgery. This may tempt your dog to lick the incision. Licking is NEVER ok. Licking is bad for the incision and will prevent healing, or worse, cause the incision to open up and expose the surgery site to infection. If your dog is licking, or you think
may lick at any point it is recommended that you purchase an E-collar. This is a large plastic cone that goes over their head and prevents access to the incision.

7. **Slick Flooring**
Slippery floors should be avoided at all times for up to 8 weeks.

8. **Stairs**
Stairs are permitted but should be limited. Try to avoid stairs when possible, but when necessary should be done slowly and on leash. Ramps are better than stairs but those should also be avoided whenever possible. The use of a sling for additional support when walking should be used at all times. **A sling can be created by simply using a towel, placing it under the groin area and lifting both ends of the towel upwards. They can also be purchased at various pet stores or online.**

9. **Swimming**
If your dog likes to swim you can begin deep water swimming starting at 14 days post-operatively. It is important that your dog is gently guided into deep water and allowed to swim in a controlled fashion and gently guided back out of the water.

10. **Exercise**
This is probably the most controversial topic amongst veterinary surgeons. We recommend to keep your dog on a leash at all times when not in the house for 8 weeks after surgery. NO doggie door, NO letting them out in the backyard, NO retractable leashed. (No matter what time of day, no matter what weather!) Walking is greatly encouraged, but on a short leash only.

Here are some guidelines..(But they are only that)

- If your dog is doing well and can tolerate more without discomfort it is OK to accelerate these distances as he/she will tolerate it. That means if they are not worse at the end of the walk than then the beginning and that at the beginning of the next walk they are no worse than at the end of the pervious walk.
- Begin with 2-3 houses and back for a few days. Slowly build to ¼ mile twice until stitches are removed. From there continue to build up to ½ a mile twice daily over the next 2 weeks. This is probably a good level to stay at for the next 4 weeks. At 2 months post-operatively off leash exercise is permitted. Still no ball or Frisbee chasing for another 2 months. At 4 months he/she can resume full exercise if it is well tolerated.

**Rechecks:** Return in 10-14 days for a suture removal which is free of charge. If everything is going well no further rechecks are necessary. Radiographs are taken at 4 – 5 weeks post surgery.