



MAINLIACHT SURGICAL DISCHARGE

Post-operative guidance



Robert Murray

B. Sc (Hons) Biomed, DVM (Hons), MRCVS

Complex Small Animal Surgery
Orthopaedic and Soft Tissue

- Complex Surgery
- Cruciate Disease
- Patellar Luxation
- Fracture Repair
- BOAS / TECA-LBO

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Colectomy Discharge Sheet

Procedure Summary

Your pet has undergone colectomy surgery, which involves removal of part or most of the large intestine. This procedure is most commonly performed for severe or chronic constipation that has not responded to medical management, but may also be required for other conditions such as tumours.

The large intestine is responsible for storing faeces and absorbing water. When it becomes chronically stretched, it can lose the ability to move faeces effectively, leading to repeated episodes of constipation.

In most cases, a subtotal colectomy is performed, preserving the junction between the small and large intestine. This helps maintain more normal stool consistency. In some cases, a full colectomy is required, which may result in softer stools long-term.

Following surgery, the intestinal tissues are delicate and require careful management during healing. Most patients are only discharged once they are eating, drinking, and stable without vomiting or diarrhoea.

Complications

Common and expected complications include softer stools and increased frequency of defaecation during the early recovery period.

Occasional complications include diarrhoea, reduced appetite, or delayed return to normal bowel function.

Less common complications include wound infection, delayed healing, or ongoing gastrointestinal upset.



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Rare but serious complications include breakdown of the intestinal surgical site, leading to leakage and peritonitis. This is a life-threatening condition requiring urgent veterinary attention. The highest risk period for this complication is during the first week following surgery.

Medications

Medication	How to Give	Duration	Purpose
Antibiotic	As prescribed	As prescribed	Infection prevention
Additional analgesia	As prescribed	Short course	Post-operative comfort

Anti-inflammatory medications are typically avoided following this type of surgery. All medications should be given exactly as prescribed. If vomiting, diarrhoea, or reduced appetite occur, contact the practice for advice.

Wound Care

The abdominal incision should be kept clean and dry. The wound must not be bathed or interfered with.

An Elizabethan collar should be used where necessary to prevent licking or chewing. The incision should be checked daily for swelling, redness, discharge, or opening.

Dressings may be present and should be kept dry. If a dressing becomes wet or heavily soiled, it may be removed or replaced as advised.



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Activity and Rest

Strict rest is required for a minimum of two weeks. Dogs should be kept on a lead at all times when outside, including in the garden, with only short, controlled toilet walks.

Cats should be kept indoors and ideally confined to a small, controlled area during the early recovery period. Running, jumping, and climbing must be prevented.

Restriction of activity is essential to protect the internal surgical site during healing.

Feeding and Gastrointestinal Care

Small, frequent meals should be offered during the early recovery period rather than large meals. A highly digestible, balanced diet is recommended.

Food intake may initially be reduced and should be gradually increased over several days. Fresh water should be available at all times.

Some changes in stool consistency and frequency are expected following colectomy. Many patients will pass softer stools and may defaecate more frequently due to reduced storage capacity.

Monitoring at Home

Close monitoring is essential during recovery. Your pet should remain comfortable, continue eating, and begin to pass faeces as healing progresses.

Any vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal discomfort, or behavioural changes should be taken seriously. The first week following surgery is the highest risk period for serious complications.



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When to Contact the Practice Immediately

Contact the practice without delay if your pet shows signs of vomiting, diarrhoea, refusal to eat, abdominal pain, lethargy, collapse, or any discharge or opening of the surgical wound.

Follow-Up and Prognosis

A post-operative check is typically recommended within a few days of discharge, followed by a further examination at approximately two to three weeks.

Most patients recover well following colectomy. Long-term, stools may be softer and passed more frequently, but most animals remain continent and maintain a good quality of life with appropriate management.

If you have any concerns at any stage, please contact your veterinary practice.

Kind regards

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