



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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Fracture Repair (Internal Fixation) Discharge Sheet

Procedure Summary

Your pet has undergone fracture repair using internal fixation with a metal plate and screws. This procedure involves carefully realigning the broken bone and stabilising it with implants placed beneath the skin to restore normal limb alignment and function.

These implants provide rigid stability, allowing the bone to heal in the correct position. In most cases, the implants are designed to remain in place permanently unless they cause irritation or require removal at a later stage.

Bone healing typically takes between six and ten weeks, depending on the fracture type, location, and your pet's age and health.

A successful outcome depends heavily on strict activity restriction and a structured rehabilitation programme. Early uncontrolled activity is the most common cause of implant failure or delayed healing.

Mild swelling, bruising, and lameness are expected in the early post-operative period.

Complications

Common and expected complications include mild swelling, bruising, stiffness, and reduced weight-bearing during the early recovery period.

Occasional complications include wound irritation, superficial infection, delayed healing, or seroma formation.

Less common complications include implant irritation, loosening of implants, delayed union of the fracture, or reduced range of motion.

Rare but serious complications include implant failure, fracture displacement, deep infection requiring implant removal, failure of the bone to heal, or the need for revision surgery.

Strict adherence to post-operative instructions is essential to minimise these risks.



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Medications

Medication	How to Give	Duration	Purpose
NSAID	With food	As prescribed	Pain relief and anti-inflammatory
Antibiotic	As directed	As prescribed	Infection prevention (if indicated)
Additional analgesia	As directed	Short course	Post-operative comfort

All medications should be given exactly as prescribed. Anti-inflammatory medications should be given with food and may occasionally cause vomiting or diarrhoea. If this occurs, contact the practice for advice. Do not administer any human medications.

Wound Care

The surgical incision must be kept clean and dry at all times. The wound should not be bathed or interfered with.

An Elizabethan collar must be worn until healing is confirmed. The incision should be checked daily for swelling, redness, discharge, or opening.

A small amount of swelling or bruising is expected initially. Any worsening swelling or discharge should be reported promptly.



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Activity and Rehabilitation

Strict activity restriction is essential until bone healing has been confirmed.

During the first two weeks, your pet should be kept on strict rest indoors, with short, controlled lead walks for toileting only. Running, jumping, and stairs must be avoided, and support such as a sling may be required in some cases.

Over the following weeks, controlled lead exercise can be gradually increased, but off-lead activity must still be avoided. As healing progresses, exercise duration can be increased further, with gradual introduction of controlled strengthening.

Return to normal activity is only permitted once healing has been confirmed. Failure to follow this plan can result in implant failure or fracture breakdown, often requiring further surgery.

Physiotherapy and Recovery

Structured rehabilitation significantly improves outcome and reduces the risk of complications.

Physiotherapy can usually begin early, depending on comfort, and focuses on maintaining joint mobility and muscle mass before progressing to controlled strengthening exercises.

Hydrotherapy is typically introduced after three to four weeks once the wound has healed and provides low-impact strengthening.

Rehabilitation should be guided by an appropriately qualified professional.



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Home Care and Environment

Your pet should be kept in a calm, controlled environment throughout recovery. Running, jumping, and rough activity must be prevented.

Non-slip flooring is recommended, and assistance may be required for mobility. Access to stairs and furniture should be restricted.

Body weight should be carefully managed, as excess weight places additional strain on the healing limb.

Monitoring at Home

You should see gradual improvement in limb use over time, including increasing weight-bearing and reduction in swelling.

Any worsening lameness, sudden non-weight-bearing, increasing swelling, or signs of pain or behavioural change should be assessed promptly.

When to Contact the Practice Immediately

Seek veterinary advice urgently if you notice sudden worsening lameness, non-weight-bearing, swelling, discharge, wound breakdown, signs of significant pain or distress, or any concerns regarding recovery.

Follow-Up and Prognosis

A re-examination is typically recommended at ten to fourteen days to assess wound healing. Further assessment, including radiographs, is usually performed at six to eight weeks to evaluate bone healing.



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Final confirmation of healing and progression to normal activity is typically made between eight and twelve weeks, depending on the fracture.

Most fractures heal successfully with appropriate stabilisation and aftercare. Some cases, particularly those involving joints, may develop long-term osteoarthritis, which can be managed medically if required.

Successful outcome depends on strict activity restriction, structured rehabilitation, appropriate physiotherapy input, and careful monitoring throughout recovery.

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

Kind regards

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