



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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Limb Amputation Surgery Discharge Sheet

Procedure Summary

Your pet has undergone limb amputation. This procedure is most commonly performed due to severe trauma or the presence of a tumour affecting the limb. The surgery involves removal of the limb at a high level to ensure complete resolution of the underlying problem and to provide a smooth and comfortable body contour.

Forelimb amputations can be more physically demanding than hind limb amputations, as the forelimbs carry a greater proportion of body weight. However, most animals adapt remarkably well following limb removal, particularly if the limb was previously painful.

Amputation is associated with short-term discomfort, but pain is carefully managed during and after surgery. Once the initial recovery period has passed, most patients show rapid improvement in comfort, mobility, and overall quality of life.

Complications

Common and expected complications include post-operative discomfort, mild swelling, bruising, and reduced activity during the early recovery period.

Occasional complications include wound irritation, local infection, or delayed healing.

Less common complications include wound breakdown, fluid accumulation, or difficulty adapting to mobility in the early stages.

Rare but serious complications include severe wound breakdown, persistent pain, or complications related to underlying disease such as tumour progression or concurrent orthopaedic issues affecting remaining limbs.



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Medications

Medication	How to Give	Duration	Purpose
Antibiotic	As prescribed	As prescribed	Infection prevention
NSAID	As prescribed with food	As prescribed	Pain relief and anti-inflammatory
Additional analgesia	As prescribed	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 site should be kept clean and dry. The wound must not be bathed or interfered with.

An Elizabethan collar should be used to prevent licking or chewing. A light protective covering may be used if advised, provided it is kept clean and dry.

A small amount of discharge may be seen initially and can be gently blotted. Any increase in swelling, discharge, or opening of the wound should be reported.

If a surgical drain has been placed, it must be protected from interference and will usually be removed within a few days.



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Activity and Mobility

Strict rest is required during the initial healing period. Exercise should be limited to short, controlled lead walks for toileting only.

Running, jumping, and climbing should be avoided for at least two weeks while the wound gains strength. Environmental management such as the use of ramps, non-slip flooring, and restriction of stairs is recommended.

Most animals adapt quickly to life on three limbs. Balance, strength, and coordination improve significantly over the first few weeks.

Rehabilitation and General Care

Gradual return to controlled movement is important for recovery. Encouraging regular, gentle activity helps maintain strength and confidence.

Physiotherapy may be beneficial in some patients, particularly larger animals, overweight patients, or those with pre-existing orthopaedic disease. Hydrotherapy can be considered once the surgical site has healed.

Body weight management is critical following amputation, as excess weight places increased strain on the remaining limbs.

Monitoring at Home

Close monitoring is essential during recovery. Your pet should become progressively more comfortable and mobile over time.

The surgical site should be checked daily, and behaviour, appetite, and comfort should be observed closely.

Any reluctance to move, persistent pain, or changes in behaviour should be taken seriously.



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When to Contact the Practice Immediately

Contact the practice without delay if you notice swelling, discharge, or opening of the wound, lethargy, reduced appetite, persistent pain, or any other concerning signs.

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.

The long-term prognosis depends on the underlying reason for the amputation. Most animals adapt extremely well and regain an excellent quality of life. Ongoing management may be required if there are concurrent conditions affecting other limbs.

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

Kind regards

Robert Murray

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