



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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Temporary Tracheostomy Discharge Sheet

Procedure Summary

Your dog has undergone placement of a temporary tracheostomy. This involves creating a temporary opening into the windpipe on the underside of the neck to allow air to bypass the upper airway.

This procedure is performed when there is significant obstruction to normal breathing through the nose and mouth. The tracheostomy allows your dog to breathe more easily while the underlying condition is treated or while swelling resolves.

This is a temporary measure. The tube will be removed once it is safe to do so and the opening will then be allowed to close naturally.

Mild coughing, increased respiratory noise, and discharge from the site are expected during the early recovery period.

Complications

Common and expected complications include coughing, gagging, and production of mucus from the tracheostomy site.

Occasional complications include blockage of the tube with mucus, local irritation or infection, and displacement of the tube.

Less common complications include difficulty maintaining a clear airway or intolerance of the tube.

Rare but serious complications include obstruction of the airway due to blockage of the tube, accidental removal of the tube with inability to breathe, or severe respiratory distress. These situations require immediate emergency attention.



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Tracheostomy Site Care

The tracheostomy site requires regular monitoring and gentle cleaning. Mucus and discharge may accumulate around the opening and should be gently removed using damp gauze. The area should be blotted rather than rubbed.

The surrounding skin can become irritated. A small amount of barrier ointment may be applied to the skin around the opening if advised, avoiding entry into the airway.

The site must not be bathed or submerged in water. Care must be taken to prevent any material, dust, or debris from entering the opening.

Airway Management at Home

It is essential that the tracheostomy tube remains clear at all times. Any signs of increased noise, effort when breathing, or visible blockage should be treated as urgent.

Your dog should be kept calm and in a cool, clean environment. Excitement, barking, and overheating should be avoided as these increase respiratory demand.

A harness must be used instead of a collar to prevent pressure on the neck.

Feeding and Drinking

Food should be given in small, controlled portions to reduce the risk of coughing or aspiration. A soft but cohesive consistency is ideal. Very liquid food should be avoided.

Water should be offered little and often initially to prevent coughing. Normal intake can be gradually resumed as tolerated.

Feeding should be supervised, and competition with other animals should be avoided.



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Activity and Environment

Strict rest is required during the recovery period. Short, controlled lead walks for toileting are acceptable.

Dust, smoke, and environmental irritants should be avoided. In warm weather, your dog should be kept cool and in the shade to minimise respiratory effort.

Monitoring at Home

Close observation is essential. Your dog should be breathing comfortably through the tracheostomy.

Any increase in respiratory effort, noise, or distress should be taken seriously. Changes in behaviour, lethargy, or reduced appetite should also be monitored.

When to Contact the Practice Immediately

Contact the practice without delay if your dog shows any signs of difficulty breathing, blockage of the tube, excessive discharge, displacement of the tube, severe coughing, distress, or collapse.

Follow-Up and Prognosis

Regular re-examinations are required to assess healing and determine when the tracheostomy tube can be safely removed.

Once the underlying condition has improved, the tube will be removed and the opening will close over time. The prognosis depends on the underlying cause of the airway obstruction.



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If you have any concerns at any stage, please contact the practice for advice.

Kind regards

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