



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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Thoracic Surgery Discharge Sheet

Procedure Summary

Your pet has undergone thoracic surgery, which involves an operation within the chest cavity. This type of surgery is performed for a range of conditions, including removal of lung tissue, foreign bodies, masses, treatment of trauma, or procedures involving structures around the heart.

Thoracic surgery is a major procedure, and patients are only discharged once breathing is stable and recovery is progressing appropriately. During the early post-operative period, a chest drain is typically used to remove air or fluid and allow the lungs to remain fully inflated. This drain is removed prior to discharge, leaving a small exit site on the chest wall.

A small amount of discharge from the drain site may be seen for one to two days following removal. This should reduce quickly as the site heals.

Complications

Common and expected complications include mild lethargy, reduced appetite, and mild discomfort at the surgical site.

Occasional complications include wound irritation, local infection, or mild discharge from the chest drain site.

Less common complications include fluid or air accumulation within the chest, delayed healing, or respiratory discomfort.

Rare but serious complications include collapse of the lung, infection within the chest cavity, or respiratory distress. Any difficulty breathing must be treated as an emergency.



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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 incision and any drain sites should be kept clean and dry. A small amount of discharge may be present initially but should improve rapidly.

The wound must not be bathed or interfered with. An Elizabethan collar should be used where necessary to prevent licking or chewing.

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 essential following thoracic surgery. Exercise should be limited to short, controlled lead walks for toileting only.

Running, jumping, climbing, and any activity that increases respiratory demand must be avoided. Cats should be kept indoors and ideally confined to a small, controlled area during the early recovery period.

Calm, controlled activity is critical to allow the chest to heal and to minimise strain on the lungs and surgical site.

Feeding and General Care

Appetite may be reduced initially but should gradually improve. Normal feeding can usually be resumed as tolerated unless otherwise advised.

In some cases, a feeding tube may have been placed, particularly if surgery involved the oesophagus. If present, separate instructions will be provided.

Fresh water should be available at all times.

Monitoring at Home

Close monitoring is essential following thoracic surgery. Your pet should be breathing comfortably and without effort.

It is important to observe for any changes in breathing pattern, rate, or effort. Subtle changes can indicate developing complications and should not be ignored.

General demeanour, appetite, and comfort should also be monitored.



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When to Contact the Practice Immediately

Any difficulty breathing must be treated as an emergency. Rapid, laboured, or noisy breathing, open-mouth breathing, or collapse requires immediate veterinary attention.

You should also contact the practice if there is increased discharge from the wound, lethargy, reduced appetite, or any other concerns regarding recovery.

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 prognosis depends on the underlying condition and the procedure performed. With appropriate rest and monitoring, many patients recover well following thoracic surgery.

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

Kind regards

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