MAINLIACHT SURGICAL DISCHARGE
Post-operative guidance

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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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Abdominal Surgery Discharge Sheet

Procedure Summary

Your pet has undergone abdominal surgery. This may have involved exploration of the abdomen, biopsy, removal of abnormal tissue, treatment of infection, or surgery involving the stomach, intestines, spleen, bladder, or other abdominal organs.

Abdominal surgery is a major procedure and careful post-operative management is essential. The abdominal wall and any internal surgical sites require time to heal. Excessive activity, vomiting, diarrhoea, or wound interference can increase the risk of complications.

Most patients are discharged once they are comfortable, stable, and able to eat and drink. Mild tiredness, reduced appetite, and discomfort are expected during the first 24 to 48 hours following surgery.

If surgery involved the stomach or intestines, the early recovery period is particularly important. Internal surgical sites are delicate, and close monitoring for vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, or deterioration is essential.

Complications

Common and expected complications include mild lethargy, reduced appetite, mild abdominal discomfort, bruising, and swelling around the incision during the early recovery period.

Occasional complications include wound irritation, superficial infection, delayed healing, vomiting, diarrhoea, or delayed return to normal appetite.

Less common complications include wound breakdown, abdominal swelling, internal bleeding, or infection within the abdomen.

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Rare but serious complications include breakdown of an internal surgical site, leakage from the stomach or intestines if these were operated on, septic peritonitis, severe infection, or the need for further surgery.

The highest risk period for serious internal complications following stomach or intestinal surgery is usually within the first three days after surgery. Patients recovering well beyond this point have a much improved outlook, although strict rest and careful monitoring remain essential for at least two weeks.

Medications

Medication	How to Give	Duration	Purpose
NSAID, if prescribed	With food	As prescribed	Pain relief and anti-inflammatory
Antibiotic	As directed	As prescribed	Infection prevention or treatment
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.

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Feeding and Gastrointestinal Care

Food can usually be reintroduced gradually once your pet is fully awake and settled, unless specific instructions have been given. Small, frequent meals are recommended during the early recovery period rather than one or two larger meals.

If the stomach or intestines were involved in the procedure, a highly digestible diet is recommended. The total daily amount of food may be reduced to approximately two thirds of the normal daily volume for the first few days, then gradually increased as advised.

Rich foods, bones, rawhide, treats, scavenging, and sudden diet changes should be avoided during recovery. Fresh water should be available at all times.

If surgery was performed due to foreign body ingestion, access to inappropriate objects must be strictly prevented. Pets do not reliably learn from these episodes, and repeat ingestion can occur if access is not controlled.

Vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, bloating, or marked lethargy after abdominal surgery should be treated as urgent.

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Wound Care

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

An Elizabethan collar, inflatable collar, or medical pet shirt should be worn until healing is confirmed. The incision should be checked daily for swelling, redness, discharge, bruising, or opening.

A dressing may be present and should be kept clean and dry. If it becomes wet, soiled, or slips, please contact the practice for advice.

A small amount of bruising or swelling is expected initially. Any worsening swelling, discharge, bleeding, or opening of the wound should be reported promptly.

Activity and Rest

Strict restriction of activity is required for a minimum of two weeks. Dogs should be kept on a lead at all times when outdoors, including in the garden, and exercise should be limited to short, controlled toilet walks only.

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

Running, jumping, climbing, stairs, rough play, and interaction with other pets should be prevented. Excessive movement can place tension on the abdominal incision and may increase the risk of wound breakdown or internal complications.

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Monitoring at Home

Close monitoring is essential during recovery. Your pet should gradually become brighter, more comfortable, and more willing to eat and move normally.

Appetite, drinking, urination, defaecation, wound appearance, behaviour, and comfort should be monitored carefully.

Mild tiredness and reduced appetite can be expected initially, but signs should steadily improve. Any sudden deterioration or failure to improve should be taken seriously.

When to Contact the Practice Immediately

Seek veterinary advice urgently if your pet develops persistent vomiting, diarrhoea, refusal to eat, abdominal pain, a swollen or tense abdomen, collapse, pale gums, marked lethargy, difficulty breathing, bleeding, discharge, wound breakdown, or any sudden deterioration.

Prompt assessment is important, as early intervention can prevent more serious complications.

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Follow-Up and Prognosis

A post-operative check is typically recommended within three to five days to assess comfort and wound healing. A further examination is usually recommended at ten to fourteen days to assess healing and remove sutures if required.

Additional follow-up may be required depending on the procedure performed and your pet's recovery.

The prognosis depends on the underlying reason for surgery and whether any internal organs were involved. Many patients recover very well following abdominal surgery with appropriate rest, medication, feeding, and monitoring.

Summary

Successful recovery depends on careful wound protection, controlled activity, appropriate feeding, administration of all prescribed medications, and close monitoring during the early post-operative period.

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

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