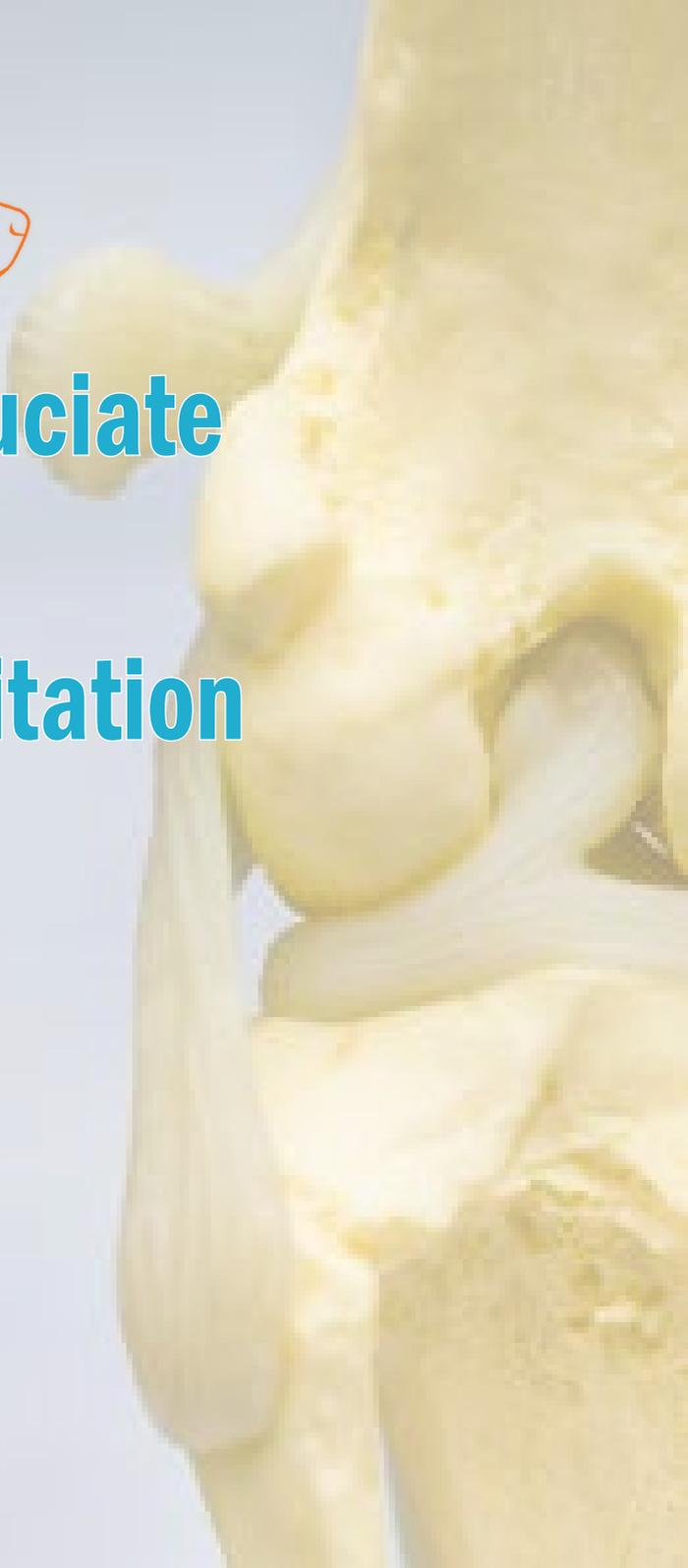


Gawler
Veterinary
Services



Post-Cruciate Repair Rehabilitation Plan



Post-Cruciate Repair Rehabilitation Plan

Surgery is just the first stage to return your pet's knee to normal function.

The next few weeks are critical to both ensure the repair heals correctly without breaking down, and to get your pet onto their road to recovery.

There are several things you can do at home to start building up the muscles in the hind leg following surgery, as well as maintaining easy motion within the knee joint.

The more you can do at home, the more successfully your pet will return to normal function in the leg.

Stage 1

From surgery until suture removal at day 14

Your pet needs strict rest during this period – either in a crate or a playpen-sized area, or in a small room. Please do not allow her to jump up onto or down from any furniture during this period to avoid sudden stress to the surgery site that may lead to breakdown of the surgery.

- Perform gentle massage of the upper thigh muscles and around the hip of the affected limb. Spend 5 minutes massaging this area 3 times daily. This encourages blood flow to the area, reduces any tension in the muscles from holding the leg off the ground, and allows the muscles to relax to allow better healing of the surgery site.



Perform gentle massage of the upper thigh muscles and around the hip of the affected limb. Spend 5 minutes massaging this area 3 times daily.

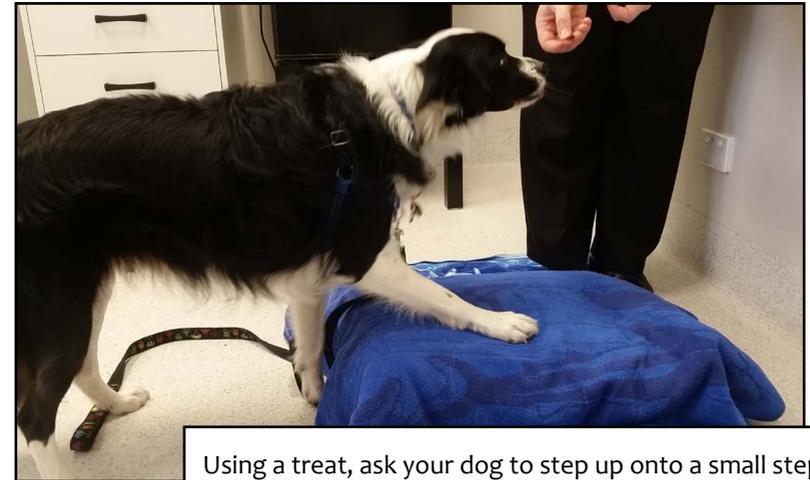
- You can take your pet on short, controlled leash walks for toileting as required, with a sling under the stomach for the first few days

until they are able to use the leg a little to get around. Please do not allow your pet to run loose in the back yard for toileting – they can damage the repair very quickly if they do too much, so they must be on the leash whenever they are outside. These toilet breaks can progress to daily 5 minute leash walks after the first week.



For the first few days after surgery, you may need to help support the back end when you take your dog out to toilet.
As they start to use the leg more, you can stop using this sling.

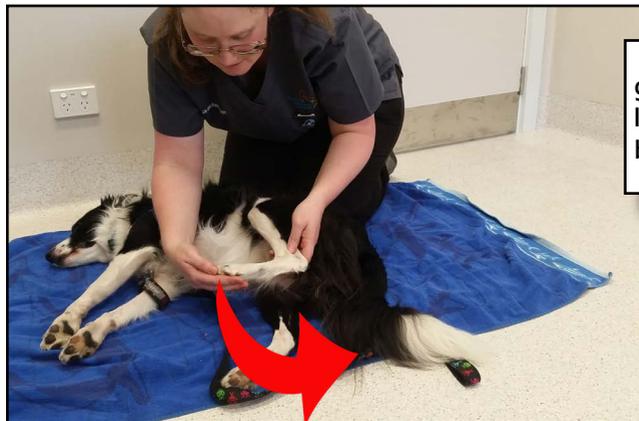
- Start performing gentle strengthening exercises with Roxy – get her to stand with her front legs on a small step for 30 seconds at a time, 3 times daily. We see much better results when you are able to get your pet using the affected leg as soon as possible after surgery, without causing them pain. If your pet shows signs of pain while performing any exercises, please book a revisit with your veterinarian immediately.



Using a treat, ask your dog to step up onto a small step with their back legs flat on the ground and stand like this for 30 seconds at a time.



- During these first two weeks, you can also start gentle passive range of motion exercises of the knee – when your pet is lying on her side with the affected leg uppermost, gently bend then extend the knee joint and the leg. Do not force her to bend their knee more than is comfortable – only perform movement that is comfortable, as uncomfortable movement may cause damage to the repairing tissues. Repeat 10-20 times, and do this up to 3 times a day.
- Monitor the surgery site for any signs of pain, swelling, redness, or discharge, and book a revisit with your veterinarian immediately if this develops, or if your pet is showing pain in the leg.



gently hold the hind leg on the lower leg below the hock



Using the other hand gently straighten the knee, then bend the knee and hock by drawing the leg up towards the body in a circular motion

Stage 2

From day 14 to day 28

Once the sutures have been removed and you have been given the okay to start increasing your pet exercise, you can start relaxing a bit on the strict confinement. However, continue to keep your her and help her to avoid jumping.

- Gradually increase the length of your pet's leash walks to 10 minutes daily.
- Increase the strengthening exercises you are performing – increase the height of the step which she is placing her front paws on, then start to gently rock her back end while she is standing on the step to encourage more muscle use in the surgical leg.
- You can add in more strengthening exercises to your daily routine. Lift your pet's opposite front leg, hold for 1 second, then release. Repeat 5 times per session, and 3 times daily.
- You can also start exercises to improve the knee function. Get your pet to sit, then stand, then sit again. This gets the knee moving as well as building up the muscles around the knee joint. Do this exercise 2-3 times daily, gradually increasing the number of sits and stands based on how easily she is moving in the knee.



Using a treat, ask your dog to step up onto a small step with their back legs flat on the ground and stand like this for 30 seconds at a time.

- The massage can now be extended down the leg to the surgery site as well – but still only perform the massage gently and only if Roxy is comfortable.



- Hydrotherapy can be a useful addition to your pet's recovery plan. We are unable to offer hydrotherapy in our clinic, but if you are interested in this we can refer you to a local clinic that does offer this service.

Hydrotherapy allows increased movement of the knee joint without putting stress or strain on the area and on the repair, so can improve your pet's movement in the knee and accelerate their return to normal use of the leg.



Stage 3

From week 4 - week 6

- Continue to gradually increase the length of your pet's leash walks by 5 minutes each week, provided she is still comfortable on the leg – reduce the length again if there is any increased soreness or lameness after the walk.
- Continue with massage and the passive range of motion exercises.
- Increase the intensity of the strengthening exercises – instead of a single step, either start walking your pet up 2-3 stairs, or walk up hill for a few steps. Start with only a few steps initially and gradually increase the number or length of these exercises as she becomes more comfortable on the leg.
- Start muscle-building exercises for her leg. A simple exercise you can do, is to lift the other (normal) hind leg for 1 second then release. This encourages the surgery leg to start taking more weight and build up muscle again. Repeat 5 times per session, and 3 sessions each day.



Stage 4

From week 7 - week 10

- As your pet continues to improve with using her hind leg, you can start to return to more normal exercise with your pet. Leash walks can continue to increase in length until you are back to your normal walk length. You can also start with short trots while they are on leash – your pet will get the most benefit from the transition between walking and trotting, so start to trot for a few steps then slow down again and repeat 3 times.
- Once there is no lameness remaining when she walks, you can allow your pet to have short periods off the leash – no more than 5 minutes at a time initially, and gradually extending this time off leash provided she is not sore or limping after the exercise.



Ongoing care

From week 11 onwards

The massage and exercise plans described above can be continued throughout your pet's life to maintain good movement in their knee joint.

While we expect a good return to most normal functions in the leg, you may notice a slight change in how they use the leg at times, especially when running or exercising.

Unfortunately, your pet other knee is also at risk of cruciate ligament injury, with many developing some damage to the 'good' knee within 2 years of the initial surgery.

We do also expect some arthritis to develop in the affected leg. However, there are several things you can do to reduce the chance of arthritis or further cruciate ligament injury:

- Cartrophen injections – your pet will start on cartrophen injections when the stitches are removed. These injections help maintain healthy cartilage within the knee joint. We recommend you maintain regular booster cartrophen injections every 3-4 months throughout her life to reduce arthritis developing in the knee.
- Regular gentle exercise – high-intensity exercise can lead to some damage to both knee joints, and can increase the risk of further cruciate ligament damage. However, regular gentle exercise maintains muscle mass and strength in the hind limbs, which acts as a buffer against damage to the joints.
- Maintain a healthy weight – any extra weight on your pet will increase the arthritis in their knee joint, and put more pressure on their other knee which may lead to further cruciate ligament damage.

If you have concerns about your pet's progress, or would like to discuss whether further treatment may be needed for arthritis or weight control, please make an appointment with your veterinarian.



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