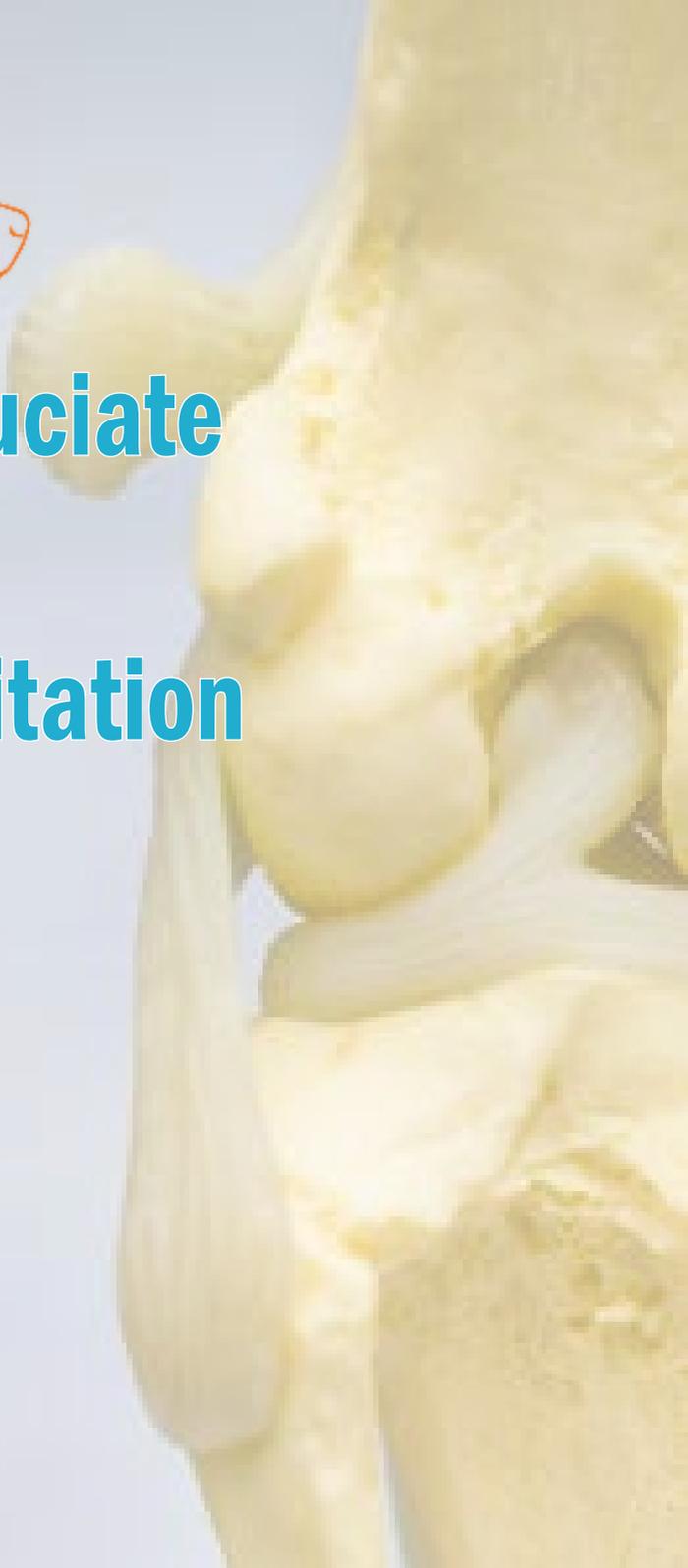


Gawler  
Veterinary  
Services



# 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

## Day 1 - Day 21

Your pet needs strict rest for the first two weeks – either in a crate or a playpen-sized area, or in a small room. Please do not allow them to jump up onto or down from any furniture during this period to avoid sudden stress to the knee that may cause further damage.

Perform gentle massage of the hind leg muscles including those around the knee and 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, and helps maintain the muscle mass in the limb.



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.

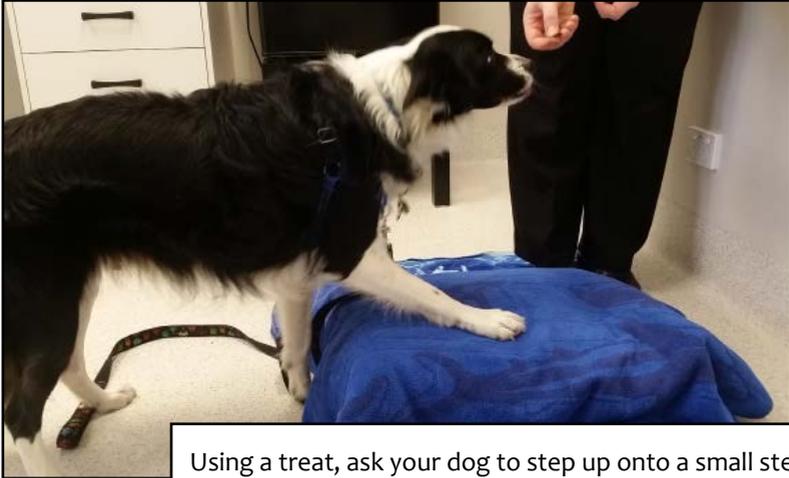
Please do not allow your pet to run loose in the back yard for toileting – they can cause further swelling or injury if they are too active during this time.

These toilet breaks can progress to daily 5 minute leash walks after the first week.

- Start performing gentle strengthening exercises with your pet – get them to stand with their 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 in a controlled manner 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.



- During these first two weeks, you can also start gentle passive range of motion exercises of the knee – when your pet is lying on their side with the affected leg uppermost, gently bend then extend the knee joint and the leg. Repeat 10-20 times, and do this up to 3 times a day.

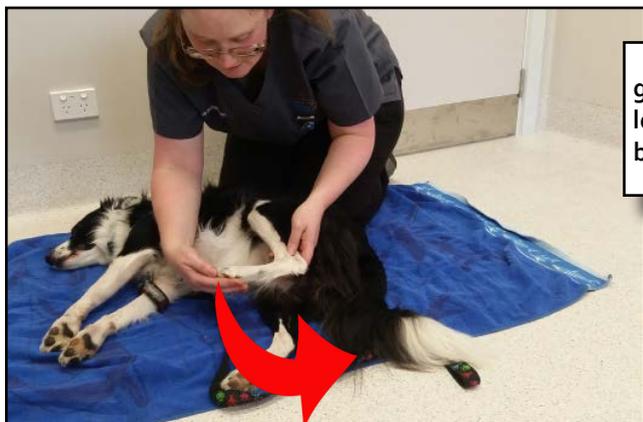


Using a treat, ask your dog to step up onto a small step with their back legs flat on the ground and stand like this for 30 seconds at a time.



If your pet is starting to use their leg more you can start to the strict confinement. However, continue to keep them quiet and avoid any jumping.

- Gradually increase the length of leash walks to 10 minutes daily.
- Increase the strengthening exercises you are performing – increase the height of the step, then start to gently rock their back end while they are standing on the step to encourage more muscle use in the recovering leg.
- You can add in more strengthening exercises to your daily routine.



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 Week 3 - Week 5

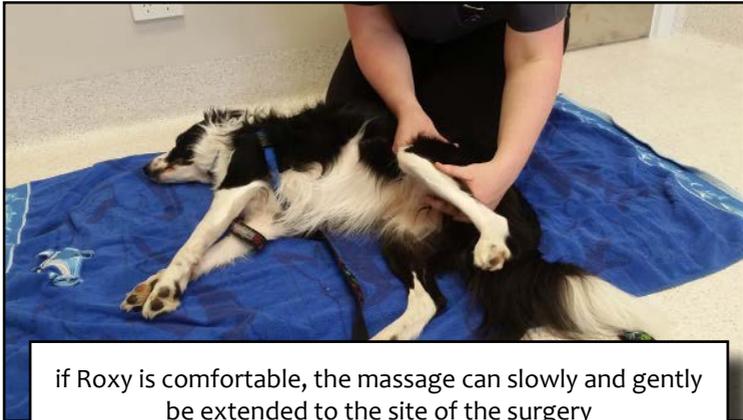
Lift the opposite front leg, hold for 1 second, then release. Repeat 5 times per session, and 3 times daily.

- 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 they are moving the knee.
- 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.



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.



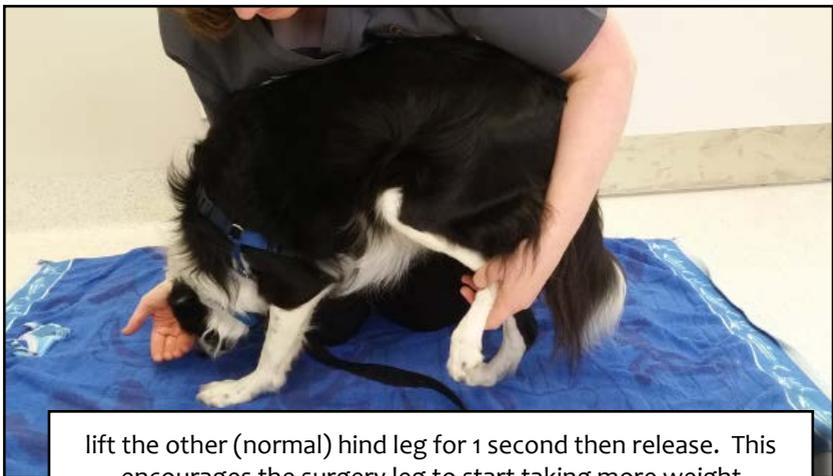
if Roxy is comfortable, the massage can slowly and gently be extended to the site of the surgery



## Stage 3

### From Week 6 - Week 8

- Continue to gradually increase the length of your pet's leash walks by 5 minutes each week, provided they are still comfortable using 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 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 they become more comfortable on the leg.
- Start muscle-building exercises for the leg. A simple exercise you can do, is to lift the other (normal) hind leg for 1 second then release. This encourages the affected leg to start taking more weight and build up muscle again. Repeat 5 times per session, and 3 sessions each day.



lift the other (normal) hind leg for 1 second then release. This encourages the surgery leg to start taking more weight

## Stage 4

### From Weeks 9 - 10

- As your pet continues to improve with using the affected 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 – the most benefit comes 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 they walk, you can allow your dog to have short periods off the leash – no more than 5 minutes at a time initially, and gradually extending this time off leash provided they are 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 hope for 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 dog is also at risk of cruciate ligament injury in their other knee, with many developing some damage to the 'good' knee within 2 years of the initial injury.

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 – We recommend you start these with a course of 4 injections over 1 month. These injections help maintain healthy cartilage within the knee joint and reduce the development of arthritis. Maintain regular booster cartrophen injections every 3-4 months throughout their 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 dog'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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