

# *Stifle Surgery Home Care*

Your pet has had surgery to stabilize the stifle (knee joint). Recovery will be faster if we keep maximum mobility of this joint while it heals.

Please give the prescribed pain relief medication as required.

## **Day 4 to 14**

Apply a warm (not hot) wheat bag to the knee for ten minutes. Once warm, gently bend and stretch the leg as shown at the clinic.

Do to the point your dog will tolerate. Repeat 15 – 20 times

Do twice a day, until your dog can tolerate a normal range of movement.

Slow leash walks can start. Put your dog on the lead and walk him/her very slowly around the house or yard.

Feeding a treat or praising every time he/she touches the surgery leg to the ground the first few times you do this can speed up leg use.

The aim is to get your dog to touch his/her toe to the ground with each slow step.

If he/she will not put the foot down at all, do your slow leash walks in rough grass or soft sand or over a few sticks on the ground.

Assisted standing while supporting your dog under the belly with a towel or a hand gently push his/her weight onto the surgery leg and pick up the good leg so he/she stands for a few minutes on his surgery leg.

Take enough of his/her weight if he/she is not uncomfortable. If he/she is able let him/her gradually take all his/her weight.

## **Day 14 onwards**

As your dog's strength and mobility improves take him/her for longer slow walks and include walking up and down slopes.

Gentle and short at first, then longer as he/she improves.

If he/she will not stretch his/her leg out fully when walking, then do slow leash walking on steep slopes.

Take to beach and allow to wade in shallow water and walk slowly in soft sand.

Set up a course of caveletti in the yard to lead him over every day.

## **Once walking with Minimal Lameness**

Start stair walking slowly up and down on leash. Increase from 5 to 7 steps to 4 flights of stairs once or twice a day.

You can speed up as your dog uses both hind legs to push up the stairs - no bunny hopping!

### Dancing -

Small/Medium dogs - Support your dog's front legs up in the air so your dog dances from side to side on his/her back legs or takes a few steps forward or back.

Larger dogs – Can have their weight supported on an exercise ball. Front legs and chest on ball as back legs step from side to side (gently roll the ball from side to side)

The pace at which your dog will progress through these exercises will vary depending on the age and health of your dog, his/her personality and the condition of his/her joint at the time of his/her surgery.

We will assess your dog and guide you as to the most appropriate exercises each time you come in for your post-operative synovan injection.

Remember fast running and jogging while holding the surgery leg up is not exercising the operated joint and allows your dog to avoid using his/her surgery leg.