

## Lateral Fabellar Suture Recovery Guide

### 1 Introduction

In the dogs' stifle (knee) there numerous ligaments which maintain joint stability. The Cranial Cruciate Ligament (CCL) is the main ligament responsible for preventing the tibia (shin bone) from shifting forward relative to the femur (thigh bone).

When a dog ruptures this ligament the joint instability causes inflammation, swelling and pain which is why your dog limps. Osteoarthritis, also known as OA or degenerative joint disease is a form of arthritis caused by inflammation leading to the eventual loss of cartilage lining the joints. Failure to stabilize this joint will accelerate this process and worsen osteoarthritis.

### 2 What surgery will my dog have?

The first part of the surgery involves examination of the internal joint structures and removal of the remnants of damaged ligament. The menisci (shock absorbing cartilages) are inspected, and any damaged tissue is removed.

A nylon implant is passed around the fabella (a small bone just behind the stifle) and through a bone tunnel in the tibia, after tensioning the implant the ends are secured with a metal crimp. Placement of this implant mimics the action of the cranial cruciate ligament, stabilising the knee.

### 3 Aftercare

It is important that your dog is kept under control for at least 6 weeks following surgery. This is to avoid undue stress on the implants and to allow good bone healing. Before your dog comes home, you should determine where you are going to confine them during this post-surgery period;

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- A dog crate that is large enough that they can stand up and turn around comfortably.
- Confinement to a small room eg. utility room.
- A cordoned off area of a larger room.

Any time your dog is out of this confined area, they should be on a lead so that you always have control over their movements.

Surfaces such as wooden floors, tile etc. can be very slippery. We suggest that you place some rugs with rubber backing or yoga mats on these surfaces to make it easier for your dog to walk around.

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Take your dog on short lead walks outside to go to the toilet</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Allow your dog to jump up and down from couches or beds.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Use cool packs on the surgical site for first 3-5 days to help reduce swelling . 5 minutes a time, twice a day will do the trick</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Allow any active play, off lead walks or play with other dogs until your vet says it's ok to do so (Usually 8-12 weeks)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Try some physio and rehab exercises to improve your pets recovery. See our separate rehab guide for more details.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Allow your pet to lick or rub at the wound. Use the buster collar provided at all times until the wound is healed</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Contact your vet if you have any concerns</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Let your dog use stairs for the first 3-4 weeks. 1 or 2 steps outside when on a lead is fine though.</li></ul>

After the surgery, your dog is going to limp on the surgically repaired leg for a period of time. This is because your dog has lost muscle, the leg is weaker and may get sore from exercise as you progress through your program. Your dog should be placing some weight on the surgical leg (even just touching toes to the floor) within 7 days from the date of the surgery.

The lameness should only improve as time goes on. If you see a deterioration in your dog's lameness then please contact your vet, particularly if they become non-weight bearing suddenly.



## Wound Care

Your pet will have dissolvable sutures placed in the surgical incision, these won't be visible from the outside and do not need to be removed. We recommend that your vet or nurse examines the wound 7-10 days after surgery to ensure the healing process is going well.

Licking introduces bacteria to the area and, in severe cases, can cause infection to not only the incision, but to the bone and implant itself. This type of complication can delay the healing significantly and potentially do permanent damage to the leg.

Infection due to licking is the most common complication following orthopaedic surgery and is completely preventable

<u>Normal</u>	<u>Abnormal</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Swelling around the incision and the surgical leg for the first week.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Swelling that lasts longer than a week</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Bruising of the leg</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Discharge that is not clear or any discharge after the first 3 days</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● A small amount of clear or blood-tinged discharge from the incision for the first few days only</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Discomfort that continues after pain medications and cold packs, especially if causing your pet to cry out or bite.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Mild discomfort around the incision and the leg itself</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Any deterioration in your pet's lameness as time goes on.</li></ul>

## Timeline for recovery

Below is an average timetable for your dog's recovery. Not every dog will heal at the same rate, some dogs may not be able for the longer walks as the weeks go on, so you can reduce the length of walks to suit your dog but do not increase them above the recommended length.

We may recommend a quicker or slower return to normal exercise based on the type of fracture and other factors such as your pets age or breed. Walks should be at a slow pace, on a relatively flat surface with good grip and should be of a duration that your pet is comfortable using the leg for the entire walk.

Please see our Rehabilitation Guide for more info on rehab exercises you can do to improve your pets recovery.

<u>Stage</u>	<u>Exercise Level</u>	<u>Additional Rehab</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0-3 days post-op</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2-5 minutes lead walk outside to toilet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cold packs on surgical site for 5 minutes twice a day</li> <li>Keep any bandage clean and dry during walks</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3-10 days post-op</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 minutes lead walk outside to toilet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start passive-range of motion (PROM) exercises</li> <li>Massage of leg</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CHECK UP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>APPOINTMENT WITH</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YOUR VET</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 days to 8 weeks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build up length of lead walks</li> <li>Add 3 minutes twice a day to length of walk every week until doing 20 minutes twice daily.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PROM exercises</li> <li>Sit-to-stand (week 3)</li> <li>3-legged stands (week 4)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 WEEKS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>APPOINTMENT WITH</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YOUR VET</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8-12 weeks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to increase length of walks by 5 minutes per week until back at normal levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stair climbing</li> <li>Trotting/running (week 8)</li> <li>Swimming</li> </ul>