

# ACL REPAIR TREATMENT

## *Instructions & Information*



### GENERAL INFORMATION

Your dog had a surgical repair of his or her cranial cruciate ligament (also called the ACL in people). The repair was achieved utilizing a technique called the "Extracapsular Suture" method.

Immediately after surgery, we placed a 3M Soft Case on the knee. This will minimize swelling, support the leg postoperatively and assist with physical therapy / rehabilitation.

There are sutures underneath the cast. These will be removed when the cast comes off. The cast typically stays on for 4 – 12 weeks. This all depends on how your pet heals after surgery. Every pet heals differently.

We **do not** recommend that your dog be confined or kept in a crate unless that is the normal arrangement for him or her.

Your pet **may** go home with an e-collar or something similar. This is to prevent damage to the cast and the incision. **Please use the e-collar.** This is for his or her benefit.

**Warning: About 50% of dogs will tear their second ACL (in the other knee) at some point after tearing the first.** This is true regardless of whether or not we repair the first knee, but there is some belief by veterinarians that repairing and rehabilitating the first knee can improve the chance of whether the second knee gets injured.

### RISK FACTORS FOR CRANIAL CRUCIATE TEARS:

- Very "upright" or straight back legs; especially knees
- Very high angle of the tibial plateau (technical measurement on x-ray)
- Breed predispositions: large breeds, active breeds, and some small breeds based on knee conformation
- Frequent jumping to and from relatively high locations
- Athletic activities on uneven surfaces or in abnormal body positions (i.e. frisbee, catching balls thrown high, etc.)
- Constant use of stairs after strain of ACL or other sprain of knee
- Concurrent medical or orthopedic problems:
  - Cushing's disease
  - Diabetes
  - Luxating patella
  - Obesity

### FOLLOW-UP VISITS

We need to see your pet weekly to evaluate the cast, assess healing/recovery, and the rehabilitation process. We may make adjustments to the cast based on how your pet is walking and using the leg, and we will recommend new therapy plans every week. This is important because it encourages your pet to use the leg more versus relying on the cast for stability.

If your pet is skipping or refusing to use the leg **during PT**, we need to see him or her within 24 hours. There could be something wrong that is causing pain.

These visits are **all** included in the cost of the surgery, so please don't hesitate to call us. Following these instructions will make your pet's recovery quicker and hopefully uneventful!

Things that could incur additional fees moving forward:

- A replacement Soft Case
- Additional pain relievers or other medications as needed
- Additional x-rays or diagnostics
- Any other unrelated medical or surgical problems
- Replacement boot

## THE CAST

Dogs don't sweat, but they do exude moisture from their skin. The cast will absorb this moisture as well as moisture from the air, from licking or chewing the cast, from stepping in drops of water around the water bowl, from stepping in puddles, etc.

- The cast **must** remain dry and clean. We are sending home a boot for your pet to wear **every** time he or she goes outside. If the cast becomes wet, the incision can become infected. The skin can also become inflamed and infected from a wet cast.
- Moisture can also damage the integrity of the cast itself, which can interfere with its ability to help the rehabilitation process.
- It is also important that the boot come off when your pet is indoors. The boot is waterproof, so this can also keep any absorbed moisture in! The exception to this rule is if your dog licks the cast, it's better to keep the boot on.
- At the end of every day, take a hair dryer set on cool and run it over the cast for 10 minutes. This will ensure that if some moisture is in there, the hair dryer will dry it out.
- Cast sores can happen about 20% of the time. If your pet is very active, he or she can develop a sore around the top of the cast or along the ankle. This can also happen from unresolved cast moisture. If you see sores occurring, please call us to have him or her evaluated. We are happy to see you!

## PHYSICAL THERAPY (PT) AND ACTIVITY

Your pet will be receiving physical therapy every day starting the day after surgery. Making them use the leg builds strong muscles and restores muscle memory, which is vital to their recovery.

### PT is important for the healing process:

- It aids in the healing of the soft tissue surrounding the knee
- It helps the brain remember how to use the leg again (muscle memory)
- It helps us know if there are any potential problems, i.e. hopping, skipping, and holding up the leg during PT which can lead to cast sores

PT should be approached like an experiment with all variables being equal; there should be no distractions during physical therapy. Every time PT is done, make sure that your pet has been fed, walked to urinate and defecate, and had play time. This way he or she can just focus on working. If all the factors are the same each time, we know that there's a problem if your pet is hopping or skipping during PT.

- Twice daily we ask that you do physical therapy with your pet. At first, this will simply be making your pet stand on all four legs for 5 minutes at a time.
- Next, we will ask that you walk with your pet very slowly for 5 minutes. Some dogs may have already graduated to this step by the time they go home. Over time we will gradually increase these walks up to 30 minutes. The idea is to make him or her use the leg. If your pet is skipping or refusing to use the leg **during PT**, we need to see him or her. There could be something wrong that is causing pain.
- Sometimes a dog will be advancing too quickly in PT/rehab and have a setback. Don't be discouraged by this. We will ask you to drop back a few minutes to a lower level of PT and stay at that therapy duration time until he/she is ready to move forward.

### The phases of PT / rehab are:

1. Standing for 5 minutes
  2. Walking the wedding march pace for 5 minutes
  3. Walking the wedding march pace and adding 1 minute to each therapy session per day
  4. Walking the wedding march for a set time (i.e. 15 minutes) for a week or longer
  5. Walking the wedding march pace for at least a week for 20-25 minutes per session without any setbacks or lameness
- Please remember that although we list the stages of PT / rehab above, decisions to move from one stage to another should only occur during follow up visits with Dr. Taylor.
  - When your pet is not working on PT, he or she can live a normal life and resume normal activity while at home. About half won't use the leg most of the time. About half will use the leg constantly. Both are okay as long as the dog walks well in the PT sessions!

***Thank you for allowing us to help you with your dog's orthopedic problems! We are here to help your dog reach his or her maximum healing potential.***

***For more information, or to talk to a member of our staff, please call the hospital at 214-726-0838.***

