

CRANIAL CRUCIATE LIGAMENT REPAIR DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

Your pet has been diagnosed with cranial cruciate ligament disease (CCLD) of the stifle (knee) joint.

This is one of the most common orthopaedic conditions affecting dogs, leading to lameness, joint pain, and arthritis.

What is Cranial Cruciate Ligament Disease?

The cranial cruciate ligament (CCL) stabilises the knee joint. Over time, this ligament can degenerate and rupture—often due to a combination of age, breed predisposition, excess weight, and conformation. Unlike humans, this is rarely the result of a single traumatic injury.

Damage to the meniscus (a cushioning cartilage between the thigh and shin bones) is common with CCL rupture. The meniscus was assessed during surgery and treated accordingly.

Surgical Treatment Performed

An **extracapsular suture repair** was performed. This involves placing a strong suture material outside the joint to stabilise it during healing. This allows the surrounding tissues and muscles to regain function and support the joint long-term.

Postoperative Care Instructions

Weeks 0–6: Critical Recovery Phase

- Confine your pet to a **small, secure indoor space** such as a pen or room with non-slip flooring.
- Allow **leash walks only for toileting**, a few minutes at a time, several times a day.
- **No running, jumping, stairs, or off-leash activity** during this period.
- An **Elizabethan collar (cone)** may have to be worn at all times for 14 days to prevent licking or chewing at the surgical site.
- Check the wound daily for redness, swelling, discharge, or odour. Contact the clinic if any concerns arise.
- Any bandage placed over the IV site can be removed once home. Surgical bandages, if present, should be removed in 7 days (unless instructed otherwise).
- Skin sutures or staples, if present, will need removal 10–14 days after surgery. Intradermal sutures will dissolve naturally and do not need removal.

Pain Management & Medications

Your pet has been provided with pain relief and anti-inflammatory medications.

Please follow all dosing instructions exactly and do not stop early unless directed by the vet.

Contact the clinic if you experience difficulty administering medications or notice any side effects (e.g., vomiting, diarrhoea, lethargy).

Weeks 6–12: Gradual Return to Activity

- If your pet is bearing weight well and the incision has healed, a **gradual** increase in activity may begin.
- Controlled leash walking can be increased in duration over several weeks.
- Avoid sudden movements, high-impact activities, or slippery floors during this time.

If lameness persists beyond 6 weeks, or if you're unsure about your pet's recovery, please consult with your vet or a **qualified animal physiotherapist**.

Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is essential for optimal recovery.

Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy help to:

- Improve limb strength and range of motion
- Minimise joint stiffness and muscle wasting
- Speed recovery and improve long-term outcomes

We recommend scheduling a physiotherapy consultation 1–2 weeks post-surgery. The physiotherapist will provide a personalised exercise plan for use at home. Once the wound has healed, underwater treadmill sessions can be particularly helpful.

Please ask our team for recommended providers.

Diet and Weight Management

Maintaining a healthy weight is critical. Excess weight puts strain on healing joints and increases the risk of future injury. Consider:

- A joint-support diet such as **Hill's J/D**
- A calorie-controlled weight loss plan (ask us for guidance)

Follow-Up Care

Recheck appointments are essential to monitor healing and address any issues early.

- **Bandage removal:** 7 days after surgery (if applicable)
- **Suture/staple removal:** 10–14 days after surgery
- **Progress review:** 6–8 weeks post-op to assess weight-bearing and function

Please contact the clinic to schedule these appointments.

When to Contact Us Immediately

Call the clinic if you notice:



- Excessive swelling, discharge, or bleeding from the surgical site
- Signs of pain or distress
- Loss of function in the limb or refusal to bear weight
- Vomiting, diarrhoea, or reduced appetite (especially if on medication)

We're here to support you and your pet through every step of recovery. Don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns.