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### Canine Rehabilitation

## Home Rehabilitation Program: Cranial Cruciate or Luxating Patella Repair

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### Week 1:

Dogs are usually toe-touching to partial weight-bearing. Edema and bruising may persist, but should continue to improve daily.

- Icing: Apply an ice pack to the knee for 10-15 minutes 3-4 times daily for the first 2 days following surgery. (An ice slurry can be made by mixing 1 part isopropyl alcohol to 2 parts water in a zip-lock bag and freezing). Use a thin towel between the ice pack and skin for comfort.
- Massage the leg before passive range of motion (PROM) and leash walks.
- Passive range of motion (PROM): Perform 10 slow repetitions of gently flexing and extending the knee through a full range of motion, 3 times daily. (Bicycle motions). Go slowly and do not force the range.
- Multiple short (about 5 minutes), controlled walks on a short leash 3 times daily. Your pet must be encouraged to walk slowly enough to bear weight on the affected leg. A sling or harness may be recommended to provide additional support and protected/partial weight-bearing.
- Ice pack knee 10-15 minutes after PROM and leash walks.
- Begin weight shifting side to side, and back and forth.
- **Problems to note:** Persistent swelling; acute pain identified by sharp yelps/cries; change in usage of the limb and/or licking the incision site. Please call the clinic immediately if you notice any of these signs.
- In clinic rehabilitation plan should begin about one week post-op.

### **Weeks 2 and 3:**

Dogs should be reliably using their surgical leg during walks. However, a noticeable limp may still be present. Swelling should be resolved, and your pet's energy level should be increasing.

- Gradually increase therapeutic exercises
  - Increase slow leash walks to about 10 minutes, 3 times daily
  - Double the distance of controlled leash walks
  - Balance exercises—elevate front feet slightly, continue weight shifting.
- Suture removal should occur with your veterinarian at the end of week two (day 10-14 post-op). This can be done during normally scheduled in-clinic rehab session.
- **Problems to note:** See Week 1. If increased fatigue, soreness, or discomfort is noticed with increased distance/walks, revert to previous level of activity and begin again from there.

### **Weeks 4 and 5:**

At this stage, a slight limp may be evident in your dog, especially after prolonged periods of rest. There should be consistent improvement in limb use and decreased pain and stiffness.

- Continue to increase therapeutic activity with slow leash walks about 20 minutes, 2-3 times per day.
- Begin strengthening exercises:
  - Sit to stand: Begin with the dog standing with the surgical side/limb against the wall (to prevent 'cheating' by holding the limb out to the side). Assist the pet to sit and stand in this position, 10-15 repetitions, 2-3 times per day.
  - Figure 8 circles to the left and right at a walk. Cones and obstacles can be spaced about 4 feet apart. 2-3 times daily.
- Increase balance activities
  - Weight-shifting, walking over couch cushions or foam mattress/uneven surfaces, balance board

## **Weeks 6 through 8:**

An intermittent limp may still be noticed. Some dogs may appear completely normal, but will still need additional healing time.

- At the end of week six, your dog should be re-examined by the rehabilitation veterinarian to discuss progress. If the leg is not fully healed, continue post-op weeks 4-5 activities.
- Increase intensity and durations of therapeutic exercises
  - Leash walks on a longer lead for 30-40 minutes 3 times per day to tolerance.
  - Cones at a walk: Circles and figure 8 trotting (no sharp turns)
  - Ramps (incline and decline)
  - Ascend/descend stairs: 5-10 steps slowly, 2-3 times per day
  - Swimming—avoid explosive entry into the water (after week 16 and recheck x-rays)
  - Gentle tug of war
  - Dancing
  - Trotting on a longer leash in a straight line (no sharp turns)
- Continue balance activities.

## **Weeks 9 through 12:**

Your dog should be nearly normal at this stage. However, they may not be as fit as prior to surgery, so a gradual return to normal activity is required.

- Final check-up with surgeon (Dr. Lamb or Dr. Haddad) to ensure complete healing. (Recheck x-rays will be taken at this time).
- Continue gradual increase of therapeutic exercises.
- Healing should be complete and your dog should return gradually to full activity by the 12<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> week.

**\*Remember:** If needed, weight loss will speed recovery!

**If at any time during the healing and rehabilitation process you have any questions or concerns about your pet's home program, please call the clinic at 440-933-5297.**

