

Postoperative tips and tricks for veterinary surgeons and nurses

The orthopaedic patient tends to be stable and otherwise healthy. Exception from this are severe trauma cases (pelvic fractures are a good example) which are not discussed here.

Part of our ethos is to reduce the surgical site infection (SSI) rate and the use of antibiotics.

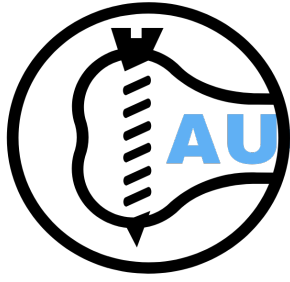
Below is a guideline on what to expect postoperative. Please treat this as guidelines and feel free to bring your own expertise and input.

The patient:

- should be rather comfortable and interested of its environment. Some drowsiness is expected
- lameness is expected due to surgical trauma
- swelling and bruising are to be expected
- sometime, some minor bleeding from the incision can be noticed; this is not of concern and can be stopped with a compressive bandage or ice packs
- NSAIDs and analgesics are usually prescribed for 7-10 days
- a buster collar/body brace should be used to prevent the patient from self mutilation

The incision:

- subcutaneous sutures were used; they do not require removal
- an adhesive dressing should cover the wound; this is most likely transparent and impermeable
- the transparent dressing will allow inspection of the incision without removing the dressing
- the dressing can be left in situ until day 7-10 postoperative; most of the time, patients try to remove it themselves;
- should be clean, dry, apposed;
- sometime some incisional dehiscence and inflammation can occur – if only the edges of the incision are affected it should not be of a concern but checkups every 3 days should be considered
- inflammation of the surgical site (swelling + hyperaemia + pain) are early signs of infection – consider a bacteriology swab and antibiotics



The postoperative checkups:

- we recommend two checks, at day 3 and 10 postoperative; however, you will have to use your clinical judgement on a case by case basis
- oedema, swelling of the surgical region are to be expected in the first week postoperative; ice packs, PROMs and gentle exercise should resolve it

The follow ups:

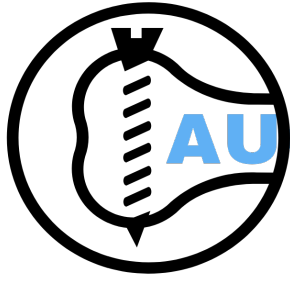
- follow up xrays should be considered 4 to 6 weeks postoperative; the patients would need sedation – please see our website for further information
- if you are confident in interpreting the xrays, please send them to us – either via [email](#) or [wettransfer](#), we are more than happy to help
- usually, the patient should be on further restricted exercise up to 12 weeks postoperative

The exercise

- dogs should be walked on a short lead;
- they should be walked from day 2 postoperative;
- the general rule is 10min/walk BID-QID; all being well, walking time can be increased by 5min every week i.e. 15min/walk week 2, 20min/walk week 3 etc.
- cats should be confined in a room without tall furniture i.e. not the kitchen; please advise the owners to interact with the cats during the confinement period - nobody likes solitary confinement
- providing all is well, house confinement can be considered from week 6 postoperative
- in my opinion, cage rest is old school and detrimental to the physical and mental health of the patient; however, some patient are difficult and they need this severe confinement – bear in mind this should be the exception not the rule

The hydro and physiotherapy

- hydrotherapy and physiotherapy are under utilised in veterinary medicine
- they should be considered as soon as possible postoperative
 - physiotherapy from day 2 postoperative – hot/cold therapy and PROMs
 - hydrotherapy from the moment the incision has healed – under water tread mill only, not free swimming
- due to regulations, the vet is responsible for the hydrotherapy referral; therefore, we have a small number of physio and hydrotherapist we are confident to recommend - please ask for details
- please check our website for further details



Discharge checklist

Name	Date
Procedure	
Postoperative sheets printed	
Surgeon updated owner	
Buster collar	
Painkillers@correct dose	
IV line out	
Pet is clean	
Postoperative plan done and follow ups and X-rays been booked	

