

# Post-Surgery Instructions

## The first 24 hours post-surgery

- Allow your pet to recover in a quiet, safe place indoors.
- Be aware that your pet's behavior may be slightly altered in the first 24 hours after surgery. For example, they may be glassy-eyed, sleepy, nauseous, wobbly, vocal, shivering, or irritable.
- Encourage frequent movement indoors to help your pet recover from the anesthesia. Allowing them to rest uninterrupted will result in longer recovery and potential complications.
- Offer small amounts of the food they eat regularly and water later in the evening. Your pet may feel nauseous, and it can take up to 48 hours for their appetite to return to normal.
- You may notice your pet received a small green tattoo, indicating they've been sterilized. This tattoo is not an extra incision and does not require cleaning.

## The next 10-14 days following surgery

- **Your pet should be closely supervised and on an exercise restriction for the next 10-14 days.** Keep your pet as quiet as possible during the first two weeks. Avoid running, jumping, and excessive playing. Strenuous activity increases your pet's risk of developing swelling around the incision site that could result in premature dissolving of sutures, opening of the incision, and costly medical care that would be your responsibility.
- Keep the incision dry. No bathing or swimming.
- Do not allow your pet to lick, scratch, or chew the incision. If this occurs, an Elizabethan collar (E-collar) must be used to help prevent potentially serious post-operative complications.
- Check the incision twice daily until healed.
  - A small amount of blood is normal immediately after surgery
  - Some redness and swelling of the incision is expected and normal
  - If you have questions or concerns, email us at: [info@clemsonpawpartners.org](mailto:info@clemsonpawpartners.org)
- **Male dogs and cats can still impregnate an unsterilized female up to one month after surgery. Please keep a close eye on your pet.**

## Protecting your pet's incision

Do not allow your pet to lick or chew their incision. Licking can lead to serious complications like the incision opening or becoming infected. This can be painful and may require follow-up visits to your vet which could result in unexpected costs to you.

## Recommended: Elizabethan collar (also called an E-collar or cone)

To prevent irritating the incision, we recommend you purchase an Elizabethan collar (E-collar) to keep your pet from being able to reach the area with their mouth. These cone collars are the most effective protection against your pet causing trauma to their incision, and should be worn for 10-14 days following surgery.

E-collars can be purchased from us or at most pet stores. They're only effective if fitted properly. The cone should go past your pet's nose by two inches. If it's any shorter, they're likely still able to reach their incision.

## What to expect after surgery

The following guidelines will help you to determine if your pet's recovery is normal, requires attention, or is in a state of emergency. These guidelines don't cover every potential issue, so if you have concerns that are not addressed here, please seek help from your veterinarian.

## **Normal issues after surgery**

These issues should resolve on their own over a few days. Contact your vet if you see no signs of improvement or things worsen over time.

- Small amount of bloody discharge from surgical incision
- Redness or a small amount of swelling or bruising at the site of incision
- Whining or crying the first night after surgery
- Decreased energy during the 24 hours following surgery
- Not urinating or defecating on their normal schedule
- Open neuter incision (males only) with minor discharge

## **Issues that require attention, but are not an emergency**

- Significant swelling at the surgical incision
- Colored discharge from the incision
- Pale gums
- Not returning to eating or drinking days after surgery
- Intermittent vomiting for days after surgery
- Slight gaps at the spay incision (females only)
- Swollen painful scrotum (males only) days after surgery

## **Emergency issues after surgery**

Please take your pet to a local, 24-hour emergency clinic (for example, Magnolia Veterinary Hospital in Anderson at 864-222-2188) if you see any of the following:

- Consistent flow of blood from surgical incision
- Difficulty breathing
- Not waking up or inability to stand
- The spay incision site is completely open (females). Please remember you will be responsible for any costs incurred if your pet is treated at one of these locations.

## **Feral Cats**

- **If cat is awake and alert, food and water can be placed in the trap with the cat.**
- **Ear tips may bleed after surgery. The risk for this increases if the cat is especially active.**
- **Keep feral cats in their trap for 24 hours after surgery.**
  - **Keep the trap in a warm dry place.**
- **Covering the trap with a towel can help keep the cat calm and reduce risk of post-surgical complications.**

***All of us here at Clemson Paw Partners Low Cost Spay Neuter Clinic appreciate your participation in the goal to lower the animal population in the Upstate. Thank you for bringing your pet to us. We have truly enjoyed their company.***