



Description: A tibiotalar arthrotomy is a surgical incision into the hock or ankle joint made in order to visualize and surgically repair problems of the joint

Indications: A tibiotalar arthrotomy is used to treat osteochondritis dissecans (OCD) and other conditions of the hock. OCD is a manifestation of a general syndrome called osteochondrosis, in which a flap of cartilage has lifted from the articular surface of the joint. Detached pieces of articular cartilage are often called joint mice. Large breed dogs are usually affected, and Rottweilers and retrievers are most frequently affected. The average age of onset of lameness is 5 to 7 months, and the condition affects both males and females.

Symptoms of hock OCD include limping, decreased range of motion of the hock, pain when the hock joint is manipulated, and occasionally, joint effusion or swelling.

Lameness of one or both rear limbs is a symptom of OCD of the hock, and OCD of the hock joint causes degenerative arthritis which is often severe. Surgery usually helps decrease the lameness by removing the loose cartilage fragments, but unfortunately surgery does not stop the arthritis. Some degree of continued lameness in the leg, especially after heavy exercise, is to be expected.

Postoperative Care

Medication: Pain medication is generally only required for the first 5-7 days following surgery. Give pain medication only as prescribed and do not give human drugs without first consulting with a veterinarian.

Bandage: The bandage on your pet's leg is a soft, padded bandage that controls swelling and provides some support in the early postoperative time. It is not designed to allow running or jumping. The bandage should be checked and/or changed as soon as possible if any of the following are noticed: (1) swelling of the toes occurs, (2) the bandage becomes wet or soiled, (3) the bandage has slipped, or (4) your pet is chewing at the bandage. If your pet has a tendency to chew, then he/she may need an Elizabethan collar designed to prevent chewing. Bandage removal is usually advised three to five days after surgery, but in some cases it may be left on until the time of suture removal.

Exercise: Please confine your pet to a quiet, clean area for approximately six weeks following surgery. Short leash walks are acceptable but no running, jumping, or playing with other pets should be allowed.

Recommended Follow-Up: Please schedule an appointment for suture removal 7 to 10 days after surgery. In addition, please contact us immediately if problems occur with the bandage, if an increase in lameness is noted, or if the incision becomes red, swollen, or has drainage.

Prognosis: The prognosis for tibiotalar joint arthrotomy depends on the underlying medical condition. Surgical repairs of fractures or luxations generally have a good prognosis, although some arthritis will result from the joint trauma. After fracture healing has occurred, lameness may be evident after heavy exercise. Surgical intervention for OCD of the tarsus generally improves the prognosis and may reduce the degree of long-term arthritis in the limb compared to dogs treated conservatively with medical management only. Potential complications of a hock arthrotomy may include incision problems, joint infections, and arthritis in the hock.

Your pet's recovery and well-being are our primary concerns, so please do not hesitate to call and speak with a surgical technician or surgeon if there are any questions regarding your pet's recovery.