

UCSU20/11.2/C18/1990
c.2



3 1799 00012 9171

Veterinary Teaching Hospital
Colorado State University
(303) 221-4535



HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR CAT OR DOG AFTER SPAY, CASTRATION OR DECLEAW SURGERY

Introduction

Most animals are less active than normal for a few days after surgery. If an animal is extremely depressed or not eating after surgery, it may have an infection or other problems. Infection often causes a fever, in which the animal has a rectal temperature in excess of 103⁰F. Fever is difficult to evaluate without actually taking the temperature with a thermometer, but it may be indicated by a hot, dry nose and a sensation of increased body heat to your touch. If you see any abnormalities in your animal or its behavior other than being slightly less active than normal, you should make an appointment to have it seen by a veterinarian,* or at least call your veterinary student or clinician for advice.

Spays

The cat or dog spay involves an incision of the skin and abdominal wall, which is usually made at the middle of the underside of the belly. To avoid unnecessary strain on the stitches which hold the belly wall together, animals should be kept relatively inactive until the skin stitches are removed.* Running, jumping and rough play must be discouraged; active dogs should be kept on a leash to urinate and defecate. Short, slow walks on a leash are appropriate for exercise, if desired. Outdoor cats should be confined to the house until stitches are removed.

Any type of liquid drainage from the incision site or progressive redness or swelling of the incision is abnormal and should be checked by a veterinarian.*

The pet should not be allowed to lick or chew at the incision, as this will cause irritation, infection, or loss of stitches. The veterinarian can provide a special collar to prevent licking or chewing.

Loss of a single skin stitch is not a problem unless the skin spreads open. Stitches should be removed by a veterinarian 10 to 14 days after surgery. This will allow the veterinarian to check for complete healing. Normal activity can resume after stitches have been removed.

Please keep the incision and stitches dry until after the stitches are removed; this means that complete baths should not be given. Moisture in this healing area can allow harmful bacteria to become established, causing an infection.

Castrations

Skin stitches are generally not used in cat or dog castrations. The incisions are usually made through the skin of the scrotum in cats and through the skin between the hind legs just forward of the testicles in dogs, except in some cases of retained testicles. When testicles are retained in the abdominal cavity, an incision in the abdominal wall must be made, and these animals required the same care as spays (above), to avoid tearing the stitches which hold the abdominal wall closed. Although a normal castration does not require as much restriction in activity as a spay, large blood vessels must be tied off and these must be allowed to heal, and running, jumping, and rough play should be discouraged for a minimum of 10 days.

Animals must be discouraged from chewing or licking at the incision, which causes a delay in healing. Any liquid drainage from the incision, or any progressive redness or swelling of the incision site (all of which are usually caused by excessive licking), should be seen by a veterinarian,* who can fit the animal with a restrictive collar and treat the skin condition.

The scrotum of male dogs commonly swells up to its original size with fluid after surgery. Normally, this fluid will gradually be absorbed. If the scrotum swells to a larger size than normal or has not decreased in size after two weeks after surgery, or if the scrotal skin becomes reddened or otherwise looks abnormal, the animal should be seen by a veterinarian.*

Skin stitch removal is generally not required for castration, as the scrotum of cats is generally not stitched, and in dogs the stitches are usually buried under the skin and are dissolved. If skin stitches are present, they should be removed by a veterinarian 10-14 days after surgery.

Castrated animals should not be given a bath until 10 days after surgery or after stitches are removed.

It may be a good idea to replace clay or pellet litters with shredded paper in the litter box of castrated cats for 7-10 days.

Declaws

The declaw procedure involves cutting the skin to remove the last bone of the toe, from which the claw grows. The skin is usually not stitched, which allows the tissues to heal with less chance of infection. Also, the presence of stitches encourages cats to chew. Quite often toes will bleed a few drops daily for 4 to 10 days after surgery. If more than a few drops are seen, the cat should be checked by a veterinarian.* The veterinarian should also see the cat* if the ends of the toes appear open or if the tips of the bones are seen.

Cats usually clean their paws after surgery, but excessive licking or chewing resulting in larger open wounds must be prevented. A collar device to prevent licking is available from the veterinarian.

Cats will have tender feet for several days to weeks after surgery. To avoid getting litter or filth into the wounds, the cat should remain indoors and the regular clay or pellet litter should be replaced by shredded or torn-up paper for at least a week. The litter box, of course, should be kept extremely clean.

Although most cats will voluntarily restrict their activity because of tender feet, it may be necessary with some animals to keep them in carriers or cages to prevent their repeatedly damaging healing tissues, causing them to bleed.

STAFF IN CHARGE OF YOUR PET'S CASE:

Senior veterinary student: _____

Clinician: _____

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

Date of surgery: _____

Suture removal between: _____

(You must contact the small animal reception desk for an appointment)

RECEIVED

APR 17 1990

COLORADO STATE LIBRARY
State Publications Library

* All rechecks for complications or suture removal are covered by the surgery fee. You may be referred to a different student or clinician than those who performed your pet's surgery, as personnel change duties as often as weekly.