

Post-operative Information: Total Ear Canal Ablation and Bulla Osteotomy

Your pet has had a Total Ear Canal Ablation with Bulla Osteotomy performed to treat severe ear canal disease. This involved removal of the entire ear canal and ear drum, and a thorough cleaning and drainage of the middle ear (the “bulla”). The purpose of this surgery is to make your pet more comfortable by removing the source of infection and pain. The elimination of further ear cleaning duties and the foul smelling discharge are added benefits. The skin has been closed over the middle ear, so there is no longer any communication between the middle ear and skin.

ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS

- Please keep your pet in a warm, safe place with no free access to stairs for the next 3-4 days as he/she recovers from anesthesia and surgery.
- As the surgical site heals, there may be discomfort and itching resulting in head shaking or pawing at the ears. To avoid any self-trauma to the site, please have your pet wear an *E-collar* until the skin sutures have been removed in 10-14 days.

INCISION CARE & MONITORING

- Please monitor the incision area daily for gapping, swelling or discharge that results in more than light crusting on the skin.
- Monitor eyelids for good “blink” function. The nerve that allows normal blinking (facial nerve) was in the operative field and may have reduced function after surgery (short or long-term). Please call if you notice reduced or absent blinking on the operated side; we will prescribe lubricating ointments and recommend a monitoring schedule. Most cases of *facial nerve paralysis* resolve with 4 weeks of surgery.

TESTS PENDING

- With some patients, we submit a culture sample from the middle ear to determine what antibiotic is most appropriate for the infection. The antibiotic that your pet comes home with may need to be changed once culture results are returned (3-5 days). *Antibiotic therapy* is usually continued for *3 weeks* following surgery; longer therapy may be necessary in particularly severe cases.
- If there were any tissues removed that were suspicious for more serious disease, they will be submitted for biopsy analysis (results in 7-10 days).

PROGRESS EXAMS

- Please return for *drain removal* with your veterinarian in *2-5 days*.
- Please return for a progress appointment with your veterinarian in *10-14 days*. Your pet's healing and recovery will be assessed, *sutures will be removed*, and any questions you have may be addressed at that time.

LONG TERM LIFESTYLE

- Continued treatment of any underlying skin disorders is important to maintain your pet's long term healthy and well-being.
- Dogs with total ear canal ablations will not hear well from that ear. Even with both ears treated with this surgery, dogs can pick up vibrations and sharp noises to assist them with navigating in their environment.
- The diseased tissues lining the middle ear have been removed to the extent that was thought safe during this procedure. The middle ear has openings into the inner ear that can be damaged (short or long term) during this process. Signs of *inner ear disturbance* include a head tilt, eyeball twitching (called nystagmus), and unsteadiness (vertigo). Typically, patients will adjust over the first 1-2 weeks such that the nystagmus and vertigo go away; it is possible for some degree of head tilt to remain long term.
- The ear canal and majority of middle ear tissues mentioned above were removed because they were diseased and no longer performing their appropriate function. It is possible that remnants of this diseased tissue still remain following this procedure and can cause problems under the surgical site. If medical treatment does not permanently resolve this problem, in rare cases, a second surgical procedure is needed to remove remaining diseased tissues.

Total ear canal ablation with bulla osteotomy is an effective method for treating end-stage ear disease. Significant post-operative complications can occur, with the frequency and severity of these complications directly related to the severity of disease at the time of surgery. Fortunately, most complications are transient and not life-threatening. Long term results are generally excellent, with owners satisfied with the significant improvement in their dog's comfort, demeanor and quality of life.