

Informed Consent

Limb Amputation

Your pet has been diagnosed with a serious injury, wound, or tumor involving a limb. In your dog's case, there is no likely medical treatment option that can resolve the condition and preserve function of the leg. You have elected a limb amputation to treat this condition. Generally, recovery is very good following surgery. The long term prognosis may depend on the underlying cause for amputation, however. Outcome is excellent with trauma cases or those involving less aggressive local cancers that do not tend to spread. In any case, we need to make you aware of a few of the common complications that could arise after this surgery. If you have any questions or concerns, please let us know.

The risks of complications after amputation repair is low, about 5-10% of cases. Here are some potential risks:

Infection- this is a risk with any surgery and is usually treatable with oral antibiotic therapy

Wound dehiscence (incision break-down)- in many cases this does not require additional surgery, but often requires wound or bandage management and time

Seroma- this is a collection of fluid under the skin. It is very common and does not usually require any medical or surgical therapy, but it's possible that if very large, cumbersome, or concerning it may require additional therapies

Recurrence of a tumor- if amputation is used as part of the treatment for a tumor, it is possible that the tumor could regrow. Depending on tumor type, amputation of the limb may not always be curative. Local recurrence or spread of the tumor beyond the primary site are possible.

Loss of mobility/difficult ambulating- this is more common if the pet had been using the limb well prior to surgery, if they have other limbs affected by orthopedic or neurological disease, or if they are large or overweight

Tissue ischemia and necrosis (death of some of the tissue at the surgical site)- Amputation requires a large amount of dissection and it is possible that the blood supply in the remaining limb/stump has been compromised by surgery. Tissue ischemia (reduced blood flow) may lead to necrosis (local tissue death) and that leads to dehiscence (incision break-down). Additional surgery could be needed, but in most cases, this issue is managed medically.

Phantom limb syndrome or phantom pain- sometimes occurs when the nerves that are severed may still send signals of pain or sensation. This could lead to discomfort, self trauma or general anxiety. Often this is managed with medication to suppress the nerves still sending signals.