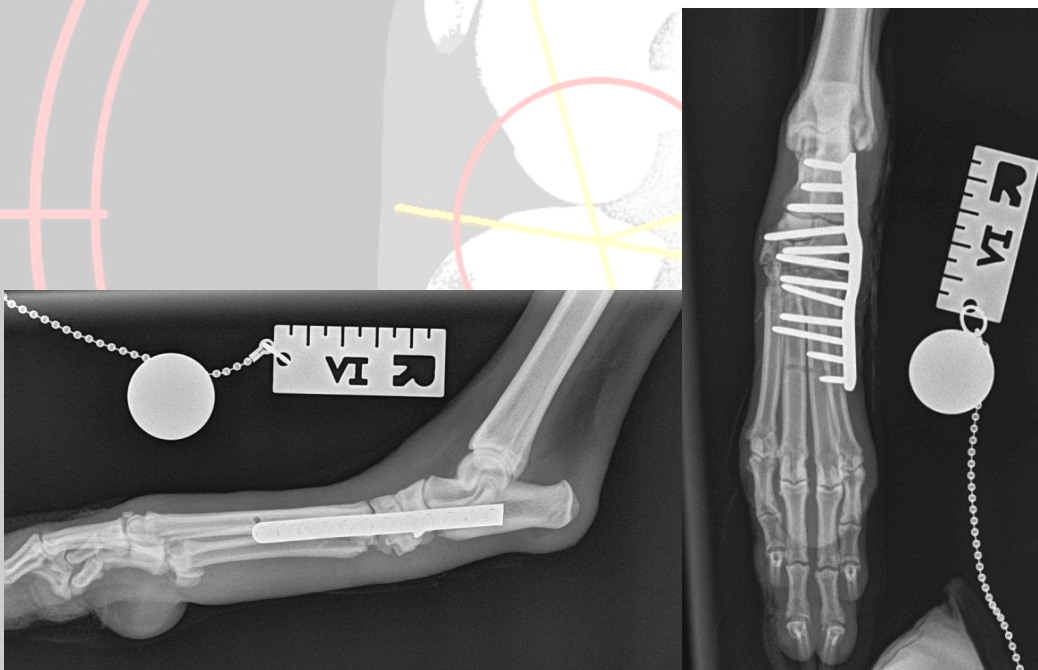


PARTIAL TARSAL ARTHRODESIS

Understanding the treatment options

Arthrodesis is a procedure to fuse two or more joint surfaces together. When considering the best option for your pet there are many factors that help us decide which treatment to recommend. These include patient age, size, behaviour and the nature and location of the fracture / dislocation. The presence or absence of open wounds will also influence the treatment plan. We will discuss these options with you and give an idea of the costs, complications risks and prognosis for the repair. One challenge with arthrodesis cases can be the risk of wound breakdown. The surgeon will take steps to minimise this risk including using a low profile plate and carefully undermining overlying soft tissues. During the surgery a high-speed burr will carefully prepare the joint surface for arthrodesis. A bone graft will often be used to encourage the joint surfaces to fuse and then a plate applied to fix the joint together.



Did you know?? At VetFix we often use locking plates and screws for our arthrodesis cases. This allows for a rigid construct and also makes screws less likely to back out.

The first few days!!

Where possible we try to avoid splinting and casting. There is an unacceptable number of patients that suffer complications with this approach. Nonetheless it is often necessary for the first few weeks.

ALWAYS ensure any dressing is kept dry and clean. It should be comfortable for your pet with no swelling above. If the toes are visible, these should not be swollen and they should be warm to touch.

Cage rest / Confinement / Exercise

This is very case dependent. Please follow the advice below:

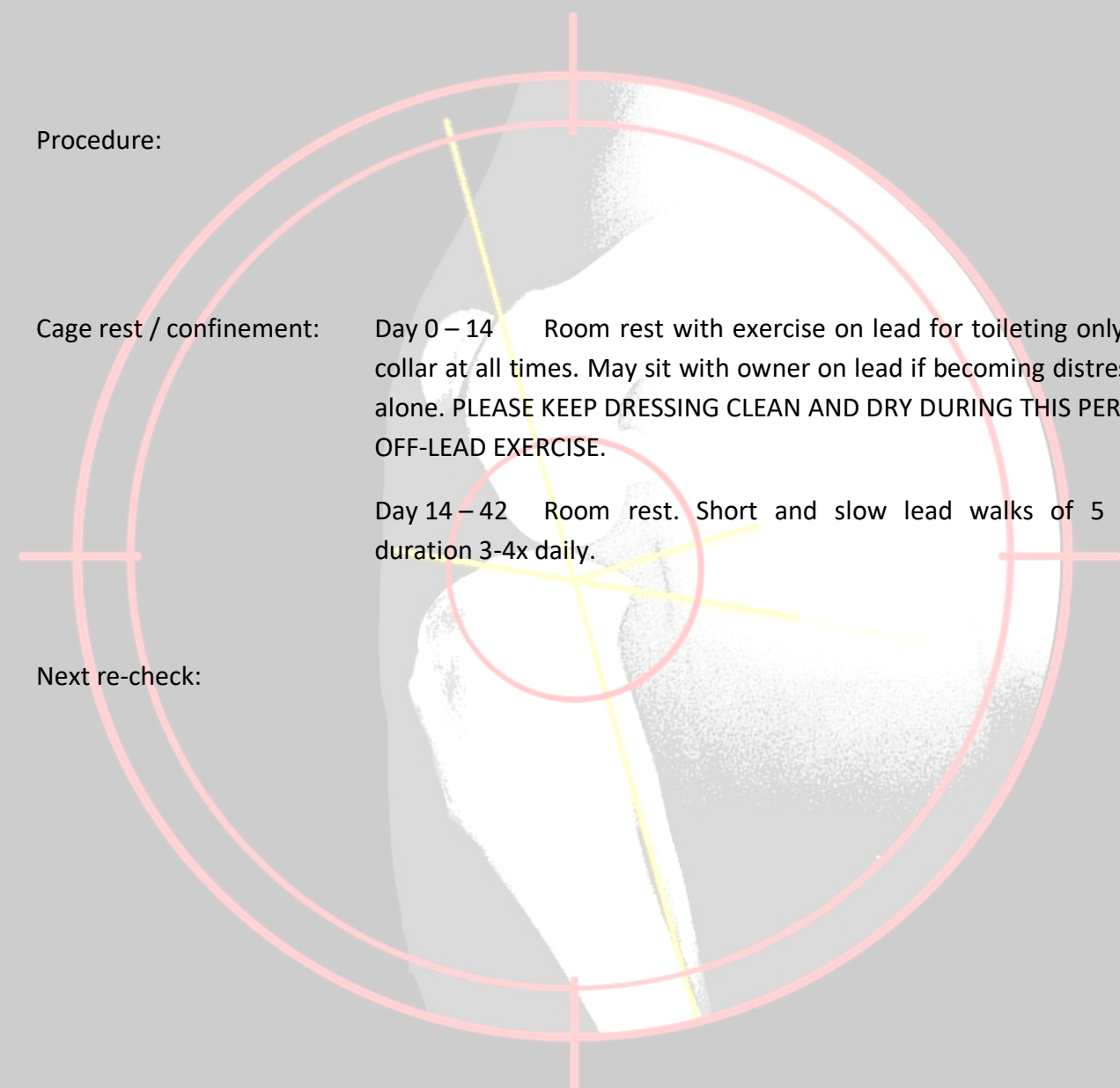
Patient Name:

Procedure:

Cage rest / confinement: Day 0 – 14 Room rest with exercise on lead for toileting only. Buster collar at all times. May sit with owner on lead if becoming distressed left alone. PLEASE KEEP DRESSING CLEAN AND DRY DURING THIS PERIOD. NO OFF-LEAD EXERCISE.

Day 14 – 42 Room rest. Short and slow lead walks of 5 minutes duration 3-4x daily.

Next re-check:



Check ups

This is extremely important. We normally recommend your vet or veterinary nurse checks your pet once a week for the first two weeks then at 30 days and 6-8 weeks. They will make sure there is no sign of infection and that your pet is using the leg normally.

Important!! Your pet should use his / her leg within 3-4 days of surgery. Should this not be the case please get in touch with your vet to make sure everything is OK.

There are a few signs to look out for that might suggest a problem. Please contact your vet should you notice any of the following:

- Discharge from the incision site (especially any bleeding after 2 days or pus)
- Worsening of any lameness
- Swelling to the leg

Review radiographs

The timing of review radiographs varies between patients. For young patients we often x-ray 3-4 weeks after the procedure, for most animals it is 6-8 weeks. There is often an additional charge for this but it can normally be performed under sedation rather than a full anaesthetic. Post-operative x-rays are important as they give us information on bone healing and also identify any concerns with the implants. These include implant loosening or early signs of infection.

Important!! If implants are removed this can leave a weak spot in the bone where the screw has been removed. It can take 12 weeks for this to heal so a careful exercise programme is essential.

We often recommend referral to a qualified physiotherapist or hydrotherapy centre. If indicated or you wish to explore this option please discuss with the vet or nurse. A referral will be necessary to ensure the rehabilitation team are aware of the surgery performed and notify the vet of any concerns.

Complications

Without doubt arthrodesis poses a real challenge in order to avoid complications. Sterility is imperative and aftercare crucial to avoid wound breakdown. It is really important to follow the advice of the veterinary nurse. Please ensure your pet wears a buster collar when advised to do so. This will avoid any opportunity for the dog to lick the incision site and introduce infection. If a dressing is applied please ensure this is kept clean and dry. If the bandage slips or does get wet or appears uncomfortable please contact the veterinary surgery for advice. Despite every effort we can see wound breakdown in up to 10% of cases. Normally this can be managed with additional dressings but occasionally this can progress to a major complication and necessitate removal of the implants. Rarely this can lead to failure of the arthrodesis and a need for a repeat surgery or at worse amputation of the leg.