Ovary-Sparing Hysterectomy

Postoperative Instructions

Ovary-sparing hysterectomy (OSH) is a method of sterilization in dogs that provides guaranteed inability to become pregnant, while maintaining reproductive hormones (estrogen and progesterone). Essentially the entire uterus is removed, while maintaining one or both ovaries. This should be compared to a traditional spay, where both the ovaries and uterus (entire reproductive tract) are removed.

General Instructions

1. Watch the incision carefully for **swelling**, **discoloration**, or **discharge**. Small amounts of bruising and swelling are inevitable after this type of surgery, but the bruising and swelling should not increase after the first several days.

2. If possible, gently **apply a COLD compress** over the surgical area for 15 minutes at least **2-3 times per day** for the first 3 days after surgery.

3. Give **the antibiotic and pain medication** as directed until gone.

4. Your dog should have an **Elizabethan collar** on if she starts to bother at the incision. This can be obtained from the hospital, if needed.

5. Sutures, if present, **should be removed in 10-14 days.**

6. Exercise should be limited to short (1/4 mile) walks on a hand held lead until the incision is healed, and sutures have been removed.

7. Bathing should be avoided until the incision is healed and sutures are removed.

8. Please call if there are any additional questions or problems.

Specific Instructions Regarding OSH

1. Because **gonadal hormones** are still present, your dog is expected to come into “behavioral” heat 2 times per year. This period generally lasts **1-2 weeks** and can be characterized by variable degrees of increased affection or agitation, restlessness, aggression toward other females, mounting behavior, tail flagging, nesting and frequent urination. Female dogs will attract intact males during this period and allow them to mount, so it is best to avoid situations where this may occur. Vaginal bleeding generally does not occur during these behavioral heats.

2. The risk of developing a **mammary gland tumor (MGT)** after OSH is expected to be the same as for an intact female dog. This risk is somewhat poorly documented but is generally estimated to be between 1/1000 and 35/1000 per year. Certain breeds may be more predisposed, but like intact female dogs frequent (monthly) palpation of all (usually 10) mammary glands is recommended if possible. Studies confirm that MGT detected early when they are small are very frequently benign.

Special instructions for OSH performed while a dog is in heat

OSH surgery is not recommended if a dog is in active heat and timing of surgery should be planned to avoid this possibility. If this occurs inadvertently, it is critical to avoid contact with intact male dogs for 6 weeks after surgery. Male mounting and penetration that occurs before healing could cause damage to the surgery site.