

Managing Common Complications Associated with PetFix Services

FEMALE DOGS

PetFix Clinic Phone Number (9am – 3pm, weekdays): **216-732-7040**

After Hours Advice Line (evenings or weekends – *instructions in case of possible post-op emergency*): **216-618-7233**

Email: appointments@petfixnortheastohio.org

Please note that this document was created to help you with decision-making around common post spay/neuter procedural issues. We want to help address your concerns by phone or email, but understand it is scary while waiting for a response. We hope this document helps you consider your options in the event of a complication. If you feel something is wrong with your animal after reading this document, please call (216) 732-7040 (9am – 3pm weekdays) or (216) 618-7233 (after hours).

INCISION (Examine the incision twice daily)

Common Concerns:

- **Soft bump under the incision:** It is common for the body to create a small pocket of fluid around the buried suture called a seroma. This does not affect your dog's wellbeing and will resolve on its own. The suture can take up to 6 months to dissolve, so this protective fluid filled sack can last for up to 6 months. A possible, but very rare complication from abdominal surgery, is a hernia. This would be a soft mass that disappears with pressure leaving a palpable hole in the abdominal wall. The soft mass would reappear over time and disappear again with pressure. Please schedule a recheck appointment at PetFix if you think your dog may have a hernia. Watching for atypical hiding by your dog, and yellow discharge from the incision should be prioritized as a seroma increases the likelihood for infection.
- **Incision infection:** Incision infections in female dogs are rare, but it is important to monitor for them as we do see them every so often. Infections are identified by your dog's unusual hiding or lack of appetite, or by an incision that looks red, painful, swollen, open or with discharge. If you notice any of these signs, please call or email for a next business day, free of charge recheck appointment. If there is an infection found we will prescribe antibiotics for \$15 and possibly re-close the incision, which would require an anesthesia charge of another \$15.

Serious Concerns [Call (216) 732-7040 (9am – 3pm weekdays) or (216) 618-7233 (after hours)]:

- **Life threatening bleeding into the abdomen post-op:** It is an extremely rare but life-threatening complication when vessels inside the abdomen bleed after surgery. Since the bleeding is inside, you cannot see it from the outside. Dogs experiencing abdominal bleeding will become less aware over time, until they collapse when you attempt to place them on their feet. Their gums become very pale. Please interact with your dog when you get home, at 4pm, and before you go to bed so you will notice any significant decline in strength, or awareness. Also, please look in your dog's mouth when you get home, at 4pm, and before bed so you know what normal pink color looks like, so you will notice a sudden paleness of color if there is internal bleeding. If your dog is acting sleepy and cannot be roused normally (for example if you put your dog on its feet and it falls to the side), or if your dog's tongue and gums are suddenly very pale, please seek emergency care.

VOMITING, LACK OF APPETITE AND/OR DIARRHEA

Common Concerns:

- **Same day as surgery:** The medication we use for pain and sleep during surgery frequently causes nausea/diarrhea after surgery. Nausea/diarrhea from these medications (except Meloxicam) should go away by the morning after surgery. If your dog is experiencing nausea, a quiet, dark place, with access to water, but away from strong smells (like dog food) is best. There is no need to seek further medical care for nausea/diarrhea unless your dog is having trouble standing or is vomiting more than 4 times in an hour for multiple hours. Small amounts of blood in the feces same day as surgery is usually caused by the extreme stress of the day, and should be monitored, but is not a terrible cause for concern.
- **Same week as surgery:** We use a medication called Meloxicam to help with pain and inflammation associated with surgery. This medication alters blood flow to the stomach and intestines which can lead to irritation. This medication lasts for a long time in the body (days), which is great for control of pain and inflammation, but can contribute to GI upset for days. A large dose of this medication was given surgery day, and a smaller amount to keep up the dose is given for several days each morning after surgery day. Please do not give this medication unless your dog is eating normally. It will cause G.I. upset on an empty stomach. Reactions to vaccines can also cause vomiting/diarrhea for about 1 week post vaccination. If your dog is experiencing vomiting for more than just the day of surgery, please call PetFix for advice.
- **More than 1 week after surgery:** This is rarely related to PetFix procedures and could be potentially concerning. Please contact PetFix for a recheck appointment for further evaluation. Please note that if we cannot find something that relates to a procedure performed at PetFix, we will refer you to a full-service vet clinic for further care.

Serious Concerns [Call (216) 732-7040 (9am – 3pm weekdays) or (216) 618-7233 (after hours)]:

- If your dog can not stand when placed on its feet normally, please seek emergency care. Though we try our very best to prevent the spread of infectious disease through sanitation, we are bringing a lot of unrelated dogs together. If you have a young

dog that was not vaccinated prior to your PetFix appointment, reasons for vomiting related to infectious diseases are much more likely and vomiting should be considered more concerning in these patients.

DELAYED "TOILETING":

Common Concerns:

- Stress and the opiate pain medication commonly cause delayed bowel movements. This is not a cause for concern unless it lasts longer than 5 days. We cause our patients to urinate by pressing on their bladder while they are sleeping. It is not uncommon for dogs to avoid "toileting" for 24 hours after they get home from PetFix.

Serious Concerns [Call (216) 732-7040 (9am – 3pm weekdays) or (216) 618-7233 (after hours)]:

- If your dog does not urinate by 4PM the day-after-surgery, please call PetFix for advice. If your dog goes into the toileting area and postures to urinate, but doesn't produce urine, this can be a medical emergency. This is extremely rare. In this case, please seek emergency care.

LUMPS AND BUMPS (NOT NEAR THE INCISION AREA):

Common Concerns:

- If your dog is eating, drinking, urinating, defecating normally, can stand and move around normally and has a normal appearing face, new bumps that are not near the incision appearing within 2 weeks of surgery are generally not life-threatening. Please call PetFix for further evaluation of the situation.

Serious Concerns [Call (216) 732-7040 (9am – 3pm weekdays) or (216) 618-7233 (after hours)]:

- Swelling around the eyes, lips, and ears is an uncommon, but possible side effect of vaccination. This is an allergic reaction and may appear within minutes of vaccination or many hours later. If you notice swelling of the face that gets noticeably worse over 20 minutes, please seek emergency veterinary care.

NEW EXCESSIVE HIDING OR SLEEPINESS

Common Concerns:

- **Same day as surgery:** This is normal in many dogs due to the pain/sleep medication and stress from surgery. Check to make sure your dog can stand when placed on its feet when you get home, at 4pm and before you go to bed. If the unusual behavior is getting obviously worse, call PetFix or if you can't reach PetFix and your dog can't stand or move normally, seek emergency care. Dogs like warm, quiet, dark places to recover from surgery. Creating spaces with these characteristics for them to rest during recovery will improve comfort.
- **2 weeks after surgery:** Unusual hiding and sleepiness is not usual after the first night. If you notice this, call PetFix for further advice.

Serious Concerns [Call (216) 732-7040 (9am – 3pm weekdays) or (216) 618-7233 (after hours)]:

- If your dog cannot stand when placed on its feet or is not able to move around normally, or if the unusual sleepy behavior is getting obviously worse, call PetFix or if you can't reach PetFix and your dog can't stand, seek emergency care.

EXCITED AND/OR AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

- The intense stress of the PetFix visit, can lead to a prolonged trauma response in some dogs. This can be seen as new aggression, or excessive fear in unusual contexts. Please call PetFix if you notice this. Please provide your dog with a safe, quiet place away from children and other animals (at least initially), while they adjust after surgery. This will ease the transition back to normal life.

PET CARE RESOURCES

Emergency Vet Info:

- Metropolitan Veterinary Hospital – (440) 673-3483 - 734 Alpha Drive, Highland Heights, OH 44143
- VCA Great Lakes Veterinary Specialists (216) 831-6789 – 4760 Richmond Rd., Warrensville Hts., OH 44128
- MEDVET Cleveland West (216) 362-6000 – 14000 Keystone Pkwy., Brook Park, OH 44135

Veterinary Clinics (regular hours):

- Community Vet (216) 273-1044 – Full-service veterinarian, low-cost exam
- Cleveland Veterinary Clinic (216) 563-1299 -- Full-service veterinarian, sliding scale fees
- Gateway Animal Clinic (216) 771-4414 – Walk-in appointments Mon.-Sat.

Financial Medical Assistance for Pet Owners in Need:

- Valley Save-a-Pet (440) 232-9124 – Vouchers for emergency vet services
- One Health Organization (216) 920-3051; www.onehealth.org – Vouchers for vet services (low-income owners)
- Willowick Pet Food Pantry (willowickpetfoodpantry@gmail.com) – Vouchers for vet services (low-income owners)