

Managing Common Complications Associated with PetFix Services

FEMALE CATS

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 cat'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 will reappear over time and disappear again with pressure. Please schedule a recheck appointment at PetFix if you think your cat may have a hernia. Watching for atypical hiding by your cat, and yellow discharge from the incision should be prioritized as a seroma increases the likelihood for infection.
- **Incision infection:** Incision infections in female cats are rare, but it is important to monitor for them as we do see them every so often. Infections are identified by your cat's unusual hiding or lack of appetite, or by an incision that looks red, swollen, open or with pus 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 can't see it from the outside. Cats 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 cat 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 cat's mouth when you get home, at 4pm, and before bed so you know what normal pink color is and so you can notice a sudden paleness of color if there is internal bleeding. If your cat is acting sleepy and can't be roused normally (for example if you put your cat on its feet and it falls to the side), or if your cats 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 cat is experiencing nausea, a quiet dark place, with access to water, but away from strong smells (like cat food) is best. There is no need to seek further medical care for nausea/diarrhea unless your cat 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. Reactions to vaccines can also cause vomiting/diarrhea for about 1 week post vaccination. If your cat 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 but 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 cat cannot stand when placed on its feet normally or if you cat is vomiting more than 4 times in an hour for multiple hours, please seek emergency care. Though we try our very best to prevent the spread of infectious disease through sanitation, we are bringing many unrelated cats together at the clinic. If you have a young cat that was not vaccinated prior to your PetFix appointment, your cat's vomiting/diarrhea may be caused by infectious disease. These symptoms should be considered more concerning in these unvaccinated patients.

DELAYED USE OF THE LITTER BOX

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. It is not uncommon for cats to avoid the litter box for 24 hours after they get home from PetFix. If your cat does not urinate by 4PM the day-after-surgery, please call PetFix for advice.

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

- If your cat goes in the litter box and postures to urinate, but does not produce urine, this can be a medical emergency.

LUMPS AND BUMPS (NOT NEAR THE INCISION AREA):

- If your cat is eating, drinking, urinating, and defecating normally, and is able to stand and move around normally, 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.

NEW EXCESSIVE HIDING OR SLEEPINESS

Common Concerns:

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

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

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

EXCITED AND/OR AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

Common Concerns:

- Stress and the opiate pain medication can cause excited and/or aggressive behavior. Cats may run around wildly and may act threatening. This should not last more than one day. Cats experiencing this, need a quiet, cool, dark place to calm down. The stress of the PetFix visit, can lead to a prolonged trauma response in some cats. This can be seen as new aggressive behavior or excessive fear in unusual contexts. Please call PetFix if you notice this.

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

- When cats get very excited after surgery, they can overheat which can be potentially life-threatening. It is important to know what to look for. Monitor your cat for heavy panting with the tongue out and mouth open. An effective way to monitor a panting cat would be to do the following: 1. Place your cat in a covered carrier in a bathroom with ice packs underneath the carrier. 2. Leave your cat for 10 minutes, then check your cat again at the end of this time. 3. By the end of this 10 minutes of quiet time, your cat should no longer be panting. Please call PetFix if you notice heavy panting and seek emergency care if heavy panting lasts longer than 10 minutes in a cool, quiet, dark environment.

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)