



## **Cranial Cruciate Ligament Repair Post-Op Rehabilitation**

These are safe guidelines for all breeds of dogs. Every dog responds differently to post-op therapy, so some dogs will respond faster than others.

### **Weeks 1-2 post-op**

- Ice, ice, ice, as many times as possible throughout the day, especially in the evening. Wrap around the stifle, 20 minutes on then 20 minutes off.
- Leash walks for 5 minutes to go out and go potty, 3 times daily.
- Heat above the stifle, in the groin area, and over the lower back once daily. Do not use the heat on the stifle. The heat is for the muscles.
- Massage the thigh and calf muscles for 5-10 minutes, three times daily.
- Passive Range of Motion (PROM): Bend and straighten the stifle by gently moving the foot in a slow bicycling motion. Begin with 10 slow repetitions once daily and increase to 50 slow repetitions three times daily over the next three weeks. This can be uncomfortable for your dog, so you might need to delay the start of this exercise for 3-5 days.

### **Week 3 post-op**

- Increase walks to 10 minutes, 3 times daily, on a leash and in straight lines only.
- Ice only at night for 20 minutes.
- Heat, if your dog will let you. Some dogs dislike the heat at this point so you can stop, but continue the ice.
- Continue massage.
- Discontinue PROM.

### **Week 4 post-op**

- Walks continue for 10 minutes, but add in figure-eights and large circles. Circle trees, stumps, rocks, etc. in both directions.
- Sit-to-stand exercises: 10 repetitions, 3 times daily.
- Ice at night. Some dogs start to dislike the ice at this point, so you can stop.

### **Weeks 5-6 post-op**

- Hydrotherapy can begin with 10 minute walks in the water in a straight line, 2-3 times per week.
- Start Cavalletti poles. Use 4-6 poles lying flat on the ground. Have the dog pass over them 4-6 times. Alternate with the hydrotherapy days. See video links for a demonstration of Cavalletti poles.
- Continue 10-20 minute leash walks.

### **Weeks 7-8 post-op**

- Increase leash walks to 20-30 minutes, four times daily, including circles, figure-eights, Cavallettis, and variable surfaces.
- Slight inclines. Go straight up the incline, but zigzag down the incline. These are included in the daily walks.
- Stairs: Slowly (5-10 flights), 2 times daily.
- Swimming can be introduced (some dogs can begin swimming at 6 weeks).

### **Weeks 9-12 post-op**

- Continue to increase activity as the dog responds. All activity is still on a leash. Some patients advance quicker than others, so be in tune to your dog.
- Steeper hills can be added, going straight up and zigzag down.
- Swimming for 30 minutes, 3-4 times per week.

### **Weeks 13-16 post-op**

- We recommend continuing most activities on a leash, but you can start letting your dog off leash in a fenced area, under supervision. No sprinting or chasing squirrels!
- Return to full activity at the end of 16 weeks.