



Limb Amputations in Pets

If you are reading this, you are likely facing the tough decision of whether to have an amputation performed on your pet. At Aspen Meadow Veterinary Specialists, we understand that this is a big decision, and we hope that the information within this handout will help give you the information you need to make the best decision for both you and your furry friend.

An amputation can be recommended for many disease entities from trauma to cancer, and in all circumstances, deciding whether to go forward with such a surgery is often a very difficult one. The first thing to realize in making this decision is that every pet is different in their ability to tolerate an amputation, but in general, the majority of dogs and cats are able to live happy, active lives with only 3 legs. Ultimately, a thorough discussion with your veterinarian should be done to make sure your pet is a good candidate.

The amputation procedure itself is considered a major surgery, but there is a less than a 5 percent chance of a major complication. In other words, greater than 95 percent of dogs sail through the procedure and are ready to go home the day after surgery, regardless of whether it is the forelimb or hind limb being removed.

Following an amputation surgery, your pet is often hospitalized for 24-48 hours for basic monitoring and pain management with IV pain medications. During that time, we ask pet owners to prepare their house for their pet's homecoming by providing padded bedding and adding area rugs to hard wood and other slick flooring in order to help with the transition to 3 legs.

Once your pet is transitioned to oral pain medications in the hospital and we know they are comfortable and doing well, your pet will be sent home for continued supportive and loving care. Because many skin sutures will be in place following the amputation procedure for 2 weeks, an E-collar or T-shirt will need to be in place so no damage to the incision occurs. Rest is also very important to allow the incision to heal. Once the skin sutures are removed, your pet can return to normal activity as tolerated.

For more information regarding amputation in pets, please also visit www.tripawds.com, which provides additional great information and support for pet owners faced with amputation as a tough decision.