BANDAGES, SPLINTS AND CASTS – AT HOME CARE

Bandages protect wounds and surgery sites from your pet’s instinct to lick or bite at the affected area. Splints and casts are designed to the protect surgery of an injured limb by taking weight off the leg through immobilisation. Your pet may attempt to remove the bandage or splint by biting or chewing at the material. Fortunately, most animals will tolerate such devices quite well if they are not too uncomfortable. If your pet tries to bite or chew the bandage material, please ensure that an Elizabethan Collar (E-Collar) is fitted whenever your pet is unsupervised. For cats in particular, it’s important to give them some SUPERVISED time to groom daily, but make sure your cat doesn’t attempt to chew or bite at the bandage – they are allowed to groom everywhere else. Once the grooming session has finished, please ensure to re-fit the E-collar.

Basics of Home Care

Keep the bandage clean and dry. If your pet goes outside in wet weather, be sure to place a plastic bag over the bandage temporarily so that none of the materials get damp or wet. DO NOT leave plastic bags on all the time, as sweaty paws will dampen the bandage and necessitate a bandage change. Watch for signs of swelling above and below the bandage (if the toes have been left exposed) and feeling the toes twice daily to ensure there is good sensation and that the toes are warm and not swollen. Please inform your regular veterinarian of any loosening or slippage of the bandage and arrange for the bandage to be replaced. Restrict exercise for dogs to very short leash walks for toileting purposes while wearing the splint/bandage. Confine dogs to a small room or crate. For cats, please confine to a crate or small run. Excessive activity delays healing and will result in more frequent bandage changes, which will incur additional costs.

Be sure you know when your regular veterinarian would like to have the bandage removed or changed and set up an appointment for that day. There are unfortunately quite a few things that can go wrong underneath bandages, splints and casts like pressure sores, reduced blood supply, skin infections, adhesive material irritation. To decrease the risk of complications, PLEASE call your regular veterinarian if:

- you can’t remember when the bandage is due to be changed
- your pet has tolerated a bandage well and suddenly starts to chew or bite at its bandage - this may indicate that there is a problem like it is too tight and may be causing pressure sores
- the bandage has any odour
- the bandage becomes wet, moist, dirty, or slips down
- You notice red marks/pressure sores at the top and/or bottom of the bandage
- your pet becomes listless, distressed or seems uncomfortable
- you just aren’t sure if it looks or “feels right”
- As a guide, most bandages need to be replaced every 7-10 days. 10 days is the MAXIMUM amount of time between bandage changes.