

# Leg Amputation Surgery

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Imagine sitting in an exam room with your cat or dog and the veterinarian giving you some bad news; your pets' leg will need to be amputated. We know what you are thinking:

1st. → Oh my God!



2nd. → How will this affect my pet; What are the risks during surgery?, What is the recovery time?  
How will this affect their day to day life?

3rd. → How will this affect myself and my family?

We also know how you are feeling and that hearing this is scary and can be devastating news. We will be there to help and answer any and all questions that you have.

## What causes the need for a limb to be amputated?

There are several different causes for the amputation of a limb including:

- ✓ Traumatic injuries to the soft tissue→ This can be from traumas such as being hit by a car, falling or being in a fight with another animal
- ✓ Fractures→ If the fracture to the limb is too severe amputation may be recommended
- ✓ Nerve Damage→ Damage to the nerves can be associated with soft tissue injuries or tumors
- ✓ Osteosarcoma→ Osteosarcoma is a tumor that affects the bones. To learn more about Osteosarcoma click [here](#)
- ✓ Other cancers→ other types of cancers can cause damage to a limb



## What does the surgery entail?

Prior to the surgery your veterinarian will want to do pre-surgical bloodwork to ensure that your pet does not have any underlying conditions that could increase their risk of complications during or after surgery. Your veterinarian will also want to take x-rays of the affected limb to determine what type of amputation is required. There are two types of amputation; a partial amputation and a full amputation. A partial amputation means that part of the affected leg will remain while a full amputation means that the entire leg would need to be removed.

Your pet would be under general anesthesia for the procedure and the procedure can take anywhere between one to two hours to complete. The surgeon will remove the affected leg and occasionally will place a drain in the surgery site to allow fluid to drain out of the area. Your pet would receive antibiotics during surgery and a multi-modal approach to pain management would be utilized. A multi-modal approach means that your pet would receive a variety of different types of pain medications and the medications will be utilized in different ways. Normally your pet will receive a pain medication before surgery even starts. They will also receive a continuous infusion of pain medication intravenously during and after the surgery. The surgeon will also have local anesthesia and nerve blocks done to reduce pain and your pet



will receive pain medications right after surgery and throughout the day. Your pet will also go home with pain medications.

### **What are the complications and risks with the surgery?**

As with any surgery there are risks with the anesthesia however we make every effort to minimize these risks. We will use anesthetic drugs that allow for minimal risk. One of the biggest post-surgical complications can be infection at the surgery site. To ensure that this does not happen your veterinarian will send home a course of oral antibiotics for your pet to complete. Another risk is having a seroma develop at the surgical site. A seroma is a collection of fluid under the skin. If the surgeon placed a drain in the surgery site this can be alleviated. The drain can also be placed after the surgery is complete if a seroma develops. Please contact your veterinarian if you notice any redness, swelling or discharge from the surgery site or if the area around the surgery site seems warm. Also contact your veterinarian if you think that your pet seems painful as they can prescribe different or additional pain medications.



### **What will their recovery be like?**

The recovery for a leg amputation surgery is fairly easy. Your pet will typically be able to be up and walking within 24 hours of the surgery. They may require some assistance walking at first. They may also need assistance going up and down stairs for a while. It is important to monitor your pet during the recovery phase to ensure that they do not jump or move wrong and potentially injuring themselves.

### **How long will their recovery be?**

The normal recovery time for a leg amputation surgery is 10 to 14 days as long as there are no complications during the recovery.

### **How will this affect their day to day life?**

Most animals require minimal changes to their normal day to day lives and will be able to do most things that they were able to do before the surgery. They may have to re-learn how to do some things but tend to figure them out quite quickly. It is important to keep your pet at their optimal weight after surgery because there will be less stress to the joints on the remaining three legs.

### **How does this affect their life expectancy?**

Depending on the cause of the leg amputation your pet can live a long and happy life. If your pets' leg was amputated due to cancerous changes your veterinarian may refer you to a veterinarian that specializes in cancer and their treatments for a better long term prognosis and further treatment.

### **What changes will myself and my family need to make in our life style and home to accommodate our pet?**

There are minimal changes that you and your family will need to make in your life style once your pet is completely recovered from the surgery. You may need to make minor changes in your house to accommodate your pet. Having stable non-slip surfaces such as carpet and rugs will help them keep their balance better. Your pet may also need a ramp to get to their favorite places such as the bed or into the truck. At first you may need to help them navigate but you and your pet soon learn their limits.



We know first-hand how this can affect your pets and your life. One of our retired clinic cats came to us when she suffered an injury to her rear leg that required her leg be

amputated when she was about a year and a half old. Her owner surrendered her to us because they felt that she would not make a good shop cat at a busy excavating company. She took a few days to re-learn how to walk but mastered it quickly. The only real accommodation that we had to make for her in the clinic was that her house had to be a lower cage because she would be unable to jump up into an upper cage. She was able to get around the clinic easily and had no real issues. Once she retired she had to master a few new things. She had to learn how to climb steps and she had to learn how to get up onto the bed. Again she adjusted well and is enjoying retirement.



One of our farm clients had a dog that was hit by a car when she was about a year old and required the amputation of a leg. She lived an active, happy and long life on the farm even after the injury. She was able to move around normally and truly enjoyed her life on the farm. The loss of a leg is typically not a detriment to the animal and they adjust well to change in their lifestyles. For more information on leg amputation surgery please feel free to contact Cedar Grove Veterinary Services at either (920) 668-6212 or [info@cgvet.com](mailto:info@cgvet.com).

