PAW HEALTH NETWORK INC.

POST-OPERATIVE AMPUTATION

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Limb **amputation** is a surgical procedure commonly performed to remove a diseased or severely injured limb.

Canine and feline patients function exceptionally well on three legs and are able to run, walk, and play without pain or discomfort. Animals do not suffer the psychological distress of losing a limb because the primary purpose of the limb is in movement.

Amputation can be performed on animals of all ages and breeds. Some older animals may take a little longer to adapt to life on three legs, depending on the underlying reason for the **amputation**.

It is important that the patient's weight be kept low to reduce stress on remaining bones and joints. Monitor for signs of bone or joint pain as the patient ages which may be a sign of early onset osteoarthritis. Please see the Osteoarthritis document for additional information.

SURGICAL TREATMENT

The forelimb is only attached to the chest wall with muscles and connective tissue. Its removal is straightforward, and once complete, creates a smooth, well-padded **amputation** site on the side of the chest.

The hindlimb requires disarticulation at the pelvis from the hip socket (coxofemoral joint). This **amputation** technique is very successful and leaves some muscle padding over the **amputation** site.

POST OPERATIVE MANAGEMENT

In some **amputation** cases, a closed-drain system is required to prevent the buildup of inflammatory fluids and capillary leakage. If a drain is placed during surgery, a recheck with a veterinarian approximately 3-5 days after surgery is required to determine if the drain can be removed.

Immediately post-operatively (after the operation) while patients are building strength and coordination, they may require a rear sling to facilitate stairs, walks, and going outside to void waste (urinate and defecate). Several commercial slings are available, but t-shirts or towels can be used as make-shift slings.

While patients may physically recover quickly after surgery, please reduce activity for the first two weeks to allow proper healing of tissues and the skin. Also, in the first month a lower level of activity will help patients adjust and prevent falls.