

Post-operative care for patients after salivary gland surgery

Salivary gland surgery is usually performed because saliva has pooled within adjacent soft tissues because of presumed damage to the ducts that drain the gland. Salivary glands produce saliva to keep the mouth moist and to aid in swallowing and digestion. There are 4 main salivary glands on each side of the head and more minor/accessory ones. Salivary glands and salivary ducts can sometimes get damaged. Occasionally this reflects chronic infection or neoplasia (cancer) but most times we have no idea what the cause was. The salivary gland upstream of the damage continues to produce saliva which never gets to the mouth, but exits into tissues through the damaged duct and it accumulates into a soft, usually painless swelling under the tongue in mouth, or on the upper part of the neck. We commonly treat these problems by removing the salivary gland(s) and as much of their ducts as we can. Removal of several salivary glands is possible without causing issues like a dry mouth.

Medication:	Antibiotics:	The choice of antibiotic may vary depending on any infection present.
	Anti-inflammatories:	We usually dispense carprofen (tablets given twice daily), or meloxicam (a liquid given once daily). These are given with food. They occasionally cause vomiting or diarrhoea, in which case prompt advice should be sought.
	Analgesics:	We sometimes dispense tramadol (tablets given twice daily) for dogs or buprenorphine (liquid given every 8 hours by mouth) for cats.

Immediately post op

Your pet can eat soft food and drink on the evening after surgery. Eating, drinking and urination should have been seen on the morning after surgery, and at least once daily thereafter – if not, please call us without delay. Defaecation sometimes isn't seen for several days post-op. Soft food should be fed for at least a couple of weeks post-op, and we advise avoiding bones/ sticks/chew toys for at least a few weeks post-operatively. (We would not advise feeding bones or chasing sticks anyway!!)

Drains are sometimes placed and you can gently dab any ooze from the drain with kitchen towel to dry it. If ooze is seen from the wound, other than from the drain, advice should be sought. Drains are typically removed conscious after around 5 days. If drains are interfered with, another surgery to remove fragments might be required so it is very wise to prevent this – eg with a soft inflatable collar that won't rub the wound..

The wound must not be interfered with or bathed. Sometimes a dressing may be used for the first day or two post-operatively. An inflatable collar might be used to reduce the likelihood of interference with wounds for two weeks post-operatively. Elizabethan collars might be used, so long as these don't dig into the wound.

Rechecks a few days after surgery may be with your own vet to save un-necessary travelling. Any drain will likely need to be removed a few days after surgery. We could do this check-up if travelling is not an issue, and all post-op check-ups are free of charge with us under our "fixed price" schemes. Please contact us to book an appointment for us to see the case back 2-3 weeks post-operatively when we can remove sutures/staples and check that all is going to plan.

Dressings may occasionally be used post-operatively to help control swelling. These should remain dry at all times. If they do become significantly wet, or if they slip, then please seek advice. Dressings are usually removed by three days post-operatively. More commonly, we just use a sticky white Primapore dressing over the wound. We glue these on and you are very unlikely to get a replacement to stick so leave ours on as long as you can and let ours just fall off on their own.

Restricted activity is not essential, but avoiding jumping around and running is wise for the first couple of weeks after surgery. Using a harness is usually more advisable than a collar to avoid pressing on the neck wound. Restricted activity is wise while any inflatable (or Elizabethan) collar is worn as these tend to catch.

Complications and prognosis

Interference with the wound or on-going infection can occasionally lead to wound break down. If drains are interfered with, another surgery to remove fragments of drains might be required. Recurrence of the salivary accumulation might occasionally occur if further functional salivary tissue remains.

Our fixed prices include any follow up consults and done with us, but don't include further medication or revision surgery. For further details please see www.wm-referrals.com, "about us", "FAQs". Consults and drugs from your usual vet will be chargeable. For further advice please contact us on 07944 105501 or at mail@wm-referrals.com. Consider texting/emailing pictures.