

The incision (cut) in the skin performed for an operation can become infected. Surgical wound infections can range from redness surrounding a small portion of the incision to deeper infections involving underlying muscles or to a severe infection spread through the bloodstream.

We take many precautions to prevent surgical wound infections. The vets and nurses wear sterile operating gowns, hats, gloves and masks over special scrub suits and use sterile surgical instruments. We perform the majority of operations in one of our two special operating theatres with anti-MRSA wall coverings and have a strict infection control policy.

Risk factors for surgical wound infections include emergency procedures, poor body condition (over and under weight patients), poor immune function, presence of certain disease, eg: diabetes, long operation times and interference with the wound by the patient. Running, climbing and jumping can result in a fluid swelling forming at the wound site. This is called a seroma and is more common in certain breeds, eg: Golden Retriever, and will resolve without treatment over time. However, any wound swelling that develops should always be checked to make sure it is not a more serious problem. Restricting your pet's exercise to gentle lead exercise for four weeks after surgery will minimise the risks of seroma formation.

A sterile dressing is placed over the surgical wound wherever possible to further minimise any bacterial contamination of the surgical site.

Treatment

This depends on the nature of the wound, degree of infection, and the bacteria responsible for the infection. Wounds may need to be cleaned, any foreign materials removed (eg: dirt), and any pus drained. These procedures may need to be carried out under sedation or general anaesthetic as they can be uncomfortable for the patient.

Very occasionally large accumulations of pus occur or an abdominal wound may become herniated (the intestines fall out of the wound). Herniation is more likely when a traumatic incident occurs (chewing, jumping etc.).

Antibiotics may also be necessary to treat the infection and prevent its spread. Severe infections or infections in immunocompromised patients may require intravenous antibiotics and hospitalisation. In the case of sepsis or septic shock the infection becomes life threatening, but fortunately this is very rare.

We offer one complementary appointment with a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse to monitor your pet's surgical site. This check is usually carried out twenty-four to forty-eight hours after the operation.

Minor wound infection can often be dealt with by a veterinary nurse at very little extra cost to the original treatment but please bear in mind that if your pet is unfortunate to suffer from a major wound complication then the cost of treatment can be very expensive, and may in severe cases cost more than the original procedure. For this reason we recommend you consider health insurance for your pet, but we ask you to check with your insurer exactly what your policy covers as not all policies cover post surgical wound infections, especially for preventive procedures such as neutering.

Please contact the surgery on 01722-333291 for advice if you think your pet may be developing a wound infection.



March 2010



Quick Reference Guide



Endell Veterinary Group

49 Endless Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 3UH

Tel: 01722-333291 Fax: 01722-338778

www.endellveterinarygroup.co.uk