

Fractures of the Toes

Surgery Service



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We Can Help

Available Services

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- Oncologic Surgery
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- Orthopedic Surgery
- Radiology & Fluoroscopy
- Soft Tissue Surgery
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Locations

Auburn Hills

3412 E. Walton Blvd.
(West of Squirrel Rd.)
(248) 371-3713

Grand Rapids

1425 Michigan St. NE
(East of Fuller Rd.)
(616) 284-5300

MVS Southfield

29080 Inkster Rd.
(North of 12 Mile Rd.)
(248) 354-6660



and delayed healing of the fracture.

Signs and diagnosis

The clinical signs of a phalangeal fracture include lameness, swelling, and abnormal movement of the affected digit (instability). In order to diagnose a fracture, x-rays of the affected area are needed. Prior to anesthesia and surgery, blood work is done in order to evaluate the health of the internal organs.

The day of surgery

Our anesthesia and surgical team will prescribe a pain management program, both during and after surgery that will keep your companion comfortable. This may include a combination of general anesthesia, injectable analgesics, oral analgesics and anti-inflammatory medication.

Surgery

There are three treatment options for phalangeal fractures: primary surgical repair, splinting/casting, and amputation of the digit. Surgery involves realigning the fractured bones and securing them in place with combination of plates, screws, pins, and wires (see photo on next page). Depending on the type of surgical repair that was used, a splint may be needed for four to five weeks after surgery. Casting the paw for eight to ten weeks after surgery is another option. Toe fractures that are treated by casting frequently heal with only a fibrous tissue, therefore successful bony union may not occur. Some dogs will tolerate this and still do well. In the event that your companion is still painful due to failure of bony healing,

Anatomy

The paws have many small bones. There are four larger bones of the hind and forelimb paws called the metatarsals and metacarpals, respectively. A set of three smaller bones is attached to each of the metatarsal and metacarpal bones, which form the toes, also known as the digits. These toe bones are called phalanges.

Cause of fractures

The most common cause of phalangeal fractures include being stepped on, being hit by a car, getting the toe caught in a slatted floor (deck) fence or stubbing the toe. Sometimes the injury will result in an open wound over the fracture in which dirt and hair usually are driven into the tissues. This could potentially result in infection

Fractures of the Toes Continued...

amputation of the digit can be performed. If the most inner or outer toes are amputated, limb function is generally unaffected. Amputation of one or both of the middle two toes may impede function or cause lameness, as these bear most of the weight. Your companion's surgeon will make a recommendation for the best treatment option for your companion, whether the fracture is treated by with a cast or with surgical intervention.

Home care

After surgery, you can continue to give your pet a prescribed pain reliever to minimize discomfort. A cast or splint is commonly placed on the limb for 8 weeks, or until the healing is complete. The cast/splint will need to be changed every one to two weeks at our hospital until no external support is necessary. It's also extremely important to limit your companion's activity and exercise level during the post-operative period. Detailed instructions will be given to you after the surgery. The surgeon will monitor the healing process every 1 to 2 weeks, during each cast/splint change. During the final exam, at three to eight weeks after the surgery (depending on the age of the pet), x-rays will be made to evaluate the healing process.



Results

Surgical repair of a fracture phalanges with implants allows for the best outcome. Uncommon complications following surgery include infection, failure of healing to take place, breakage of the metal implants and cold sensitivity.



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Fractures of the Toes Continued...

Assessment and recommendations

Patient name: _____

Date: _____

Treatment

- Surgery is recommended by an MVS surgeon
- Casting of the affected paw is recommended

The following has been prescribed

- No medications or special diet are necessary at this time
- Pain controlling medication: _____
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medication: _____
- Antibiotics: _____

Exercise

- Confine your pet to the house other than very short leash walks necessary for bowel movements and urination
- Restrict exercise to leash walks 10 minutes twice daily
- A splint/bandage has been applied. Twice daily, please check for:
 - Swelling of toes (if there is no swelling the middle two toe nails will touch each other)
 - Cold toes – this may indicate poor circulation
 - Foul odor
 - Discharge seeping through the bandage
 - Increased lameness
 - Excessive licking or chewing at the bandage
 - Please note that a new bandage/cast will feel strange to your pet initially, but he/she will typically get used to it within 12 hours. If your pet continues to be uncomfortable or more lame after the bandage has been changed, please call us.

Preparation for surgery

- Start fasting your companion at midnight before the surgery; water should not be withheld
- Pepcid AC 10 mg tablets: give _____ tablet(s) with water (use a syringe if needed) at 6 AM on the day of surgery

*Composed by Daniel A. Degner, DVM, DACVS
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