

Dislocations of the Paw Bones

Surgery Service



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We Can Help

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- Radiology & Fluoroscopy
- Soft Tissue Surgery
- Ultrasound

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



Anatomy

The paws have many bones that are held in place by strong ligaments. Between each of the bones is a joint. A fracture-dislocation commonly involves a fracture of one or more small bones within the paw and/or tearing of ligaments that support the joints of the paw.

Cause of fracture-dislocation

In small breed dogs, landing on the hind limb from a fall or being stepped on is the most common cause of fracture-dislocations of the paw. In large breed dogs, substantial trauma is needed to cause this type of injury such as being hit by a car, getting the paw caught in a fence or getting the paw caught in a hole in the ground when running. Sometimes the

injury will result in an open wound over the fracture-dislocation in which dirt and hair usually are driven into the tissues. This could potentially result in infection and delayed healing.

Signs and diagnosis

The clinical signs of a fracture-dislocation include nonweight-bearing lameness, swelling, and abnormal movement of the paw (instability). In order to determine the extent of the ligament damage to the paw, stress x-rays (pressure is applied to various joints in the paw during the x-ray) are done while the patient is under heavy sedation or full anesthesia. The information gathered from this study is critical to determine the type of surgical repair required. Prior to anesthesia and surgery, blood work is done in order to evaluate the health of the internal organs.

Surgery

For most fracture-dislocations, screws are placed in the bone and wire is tied around the screws to stabilize the disrupted joint(s). In some cases there is extensive damage or fractures of the bones in the paw and a fusion of the joint(s) is needed. This involves removing the cartilage from the joints, packing the affected joints with bone graft collected from the patient's pelvis or shoulder and stabilizing the joint with screws or a plate and screws. If the fracture-dislocation is caused by a gunshot or other trauma that results in an open wound over the fracture site, an external fixator may be the treatment of choice. This apparatus consists of multiple pins that penetrate the skin and bone and are connected to external bars that run parallel to the bone.



Dislocation of the Paw Bones Continued...

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 5 to 8 weeks, 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 five 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-luxation of the paw with metal implants allows for the best outcome versus no surgery. Most patients respond very well to the treatment with resolution of lameness. Arthritis likely will develop within the damaged joints, which may cause stiffness of the limb with heavy exercise, after weather changes or after napping. Medications can be prescribed to alleviate these signs. Uncommon complications include infection, failure of healing to take place, breakage of the metal plate or screws and cold sensitivity.



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Dislocation of the Paw Bones Continued...

Assessment and recommendations

Patient: _____ Date: _____

Treatment

- Surgery is recommended by an MVS surgeon
- No Surgery is recommended and casting of the 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



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