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My dog is having cataract surgery ...what do I need to know?

Having cataract surgery for your dog can be a very exciting experience. This handout is designed to prepare you and your dog for surgery as well as alleviate some of the anxieties associated with surgery.

Success Rate: In the past five years, specialized training and modern equipment have drastically improved the success rate of cataract surgery. Approximately 90% of dogs have excellent long-term vision after surgery.

Complications: As with any surgery, cataract surgery has potential complications. Some Complications are short term and resolve with treatment. Regrettably, some complications are severe and blinding. Very rarely eye removal or an intraocular prosthesis is necessary to resolve the complication. To minimize the complications, we request diligent administration of prescribed medications and frequent re-evaluations after surgery. Glaucoma, or increased intraocular pressure, may occur post operatively. Glaucoma may or may not be controllable with medication and can be vision-threatening. Uveitis, or inflammation within the eye, may occur and potentially require life-long medication. Retinal detachment is a possible complication due to the nature of the surgical procedure itself. Eye infection after surgery is rare because surgery is performed using sterile technique. Scar tissue formation around the intraocular lens and around the surgical incision are other possible complications. General anesthesia is a risk in itself. However, we take all precautions by performing complete pre-operative blood work, a thorough physical exam, employing the most current anesthetic protocols, and diligent anesthetic monitoring to ensure the safest anesthesia possible.

Getting Your Dog Ready for Surgery: In the days or weeks prior to surgery you will be administering topical and oral medications to prepare your dog for surgery. It is very important to follow all instructions on these medications as they improve the success of surgery and keep your dog comfortable until surgery can be performed.

What Happens the Day of Surgery? Please bring all of your dog's medications with you on the day of surgery, as we will need to use them throughout the day. If your dog is a diabetic DO NOT administer insulin the morning of surgery, but DO bring the insulin with you to VRCC. We will closely monitor your dog's blood glucose before, during, and after surgery taking appropriate actions to maintain normal levels.

We will administer pain control and sedative medications before surgery to help keep your dog calm. We will place an intravenous (IV) catheter in his or her leg to administer intraoperative antibiotics, anti-inflammatory injections, fluids, and other necessary medications. For surgery, we will place a breathing tube in his/her trachea (windpipe) to administer oxygen and gas anesthesia. We will closely monitor heart rate and rhythm, blood pressure, blood oxygen levels and blood carbon dioxide levels throughout the procedure. Cataract surgery takes approximately 2 hours. After your dog awakes from anesthesia we will closely monitor his/her comfort and vision will be evaluated. We will measure the pressure within the eye to ensure it stays within normal limits. Typically, your pet will be able to go home on the same day as the surgery.

What Happens After Surgery? Your pet will go home the same evening but will need to return to our office the following day for a recheck. Frequent recheck exams after surgery are necessary to ensure proper healing takes place. We will need to see your pet 1-day, and approximately 1 week, and 2-4 weeks post-operatively. From there, the doctor will advise you on how frequently he/she would like to see your dog over the following year. At minimum, an annual exam will be required. For your convenience, we have practices located in Boulder and Parker as well as in Englewood.

Medications are a very important part of the aftercare. All instructions must be followed carefully for a successful recovery. If you have any questions regarding medications please call our office.

It is extremely important that you call us immediately if you notice any change with the eye. For example: if the white of the eye turns redder, or if the surface of the eye becomes hazy or blue in color, or if your dog suddenly starts squinting. Any of these signs could indicate complications that require immediate medical attention.

Restoring vision to a blind dog is a very rewarding part of our job. The tail-wagging and smiling that goes on when patients and clients see each other after weeks, months, or years of vision loss is a delight to see again and again.