

## Femoral Head & Neck Excision (FHNE) as a salvage procedure for hip disease

Your vet has arranged for me to see your dog or cat because they are concerned that there is a problem with their hip joint. We have decided together that the best way to treat the problem is by removing the head of the thigh bone (femoral head). Whatever the underlying cause of the hip problem, the aim of this surgical procedure is to remove the painful contact between the thigh bone and the hip bone, which should improve your pet's lameness and quality of life.

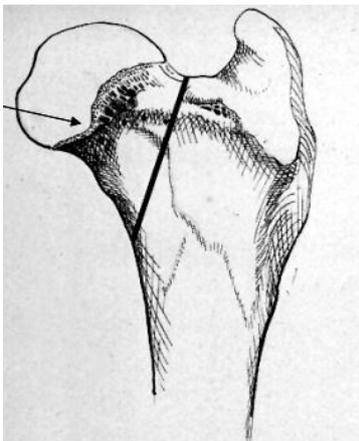
Fortunately, most pets do well following this procedure, as they are able to form a *false* joint supported by the muscles. For cats and small-medium dogs, this usually works well, and pets that have been treated in this way are usually able to walk normally without pain shortly after the procedure. The outcome in larger dogs can be less predictable or successful and for this reason, in larger dogs we may consider recommending a *Total Hip Replacement* as a better option. Nonetheless if for any reason a hip replacement is not possible, FHNE is still potentially a good option.

### The Operation

Your practice will make arrangements with you to drop your pet off on the day of the surgery. Please don't give breakfast on the morning of the procedure. If they are receiving pain relief, they can have their pain relief the night before the operation, but if you normally give it in the morning then please don't give it on the day. Please let the nurse/vet admitting your dog know when they last had pain relief, and also if you will need a further supply of any medication. I will probably not meet you in person on the day of the procedure, but I will speak to you by phone if possible. If you have any questions based on the information in this sheet then please feel free to ask me then. When I arrive at the practice I will examine your pet and confirm the diagnosis and plan for surgery. If for any reason we need to alter the plan I will contact you to discuss it.

Your pet will be mildly sedated to minimise stress, and then anaesthetised. Your pet's leg will be prepared for surgery. The leg will be shaved from the middle of the back to the hock (ankle) to give us a large clean zone to minimise the risk of infection.

The operation is performed via a single incision over the hip joint. The hip is carefully dislocated from the socket and then the femoral head and neck are removed using an *oscillating saw* (a specialised surgical power cutting tool). It is very important that no sharp points or edges are left and we may smooth off any rough areas with other tools. We will take an x-ray of your pet's hip after surgery to check that we have removed the right amount of bone.



In most cases your pet will be discharged from the practice the evening of the procedure. You will receive a printed discharge note from us which will give details of the procedure, medication and instructions for exercise. Your pet will receive an injection of painkiller immediately before going home and you will also generally have some further pain

relief to give at bedtime. Nonetheless, on the night after a operation like this you may find your pet is restless or agitated. You should make sure that you know how to contact your practice's out-of-hours service and also where you would need to go if your pet needed to be checked over, bearing in mind that this may not be at your usual practice premises.

## **EXERCISE & RECOVERY**

We recommend that you try to get your pet moving and exercising as quickly as you can after surgery. There is no need for strict exercise restriction. For dogs, I would restrict them to short lead walks only for 3-5 days, and then start increasing the length of walks fairly quickly to 15-20 minutes twice daily over the following 2-3 weeks. You can also help to build up/maintain the strength of the muscles around the hip by "dancing" with your dog or cat, (i.e. lifting their front paws up and helping them walk on their hindlimbs).

## **Risks of Surgery**

This is a procedure with relatively low risks, and it is a procedure that for us is very routine. However as you would expect for surgery there are some risks.

1. Infection – Infection is a small risk of all surgery. We will take all the same precautions to avoid infection as I would take if I were performing the surgery at a specialist hospital (drapes, gowns, gloves etc). Your pet may also receive antibiotics during surgery You should monitor the wound after surgery for any excessive redness, swelling or discharge. If an infection does develop it will generally resolve with further medical treatment. Very occasionally the area may need to be flushed.
2. Ongoing pain after surgery – pain can be unpredictable and sometimes although the source of the pain has been removed patients may continue to appear to experience pain. If this happens we will want to be sure that no spurs of bone have developed which might be irritating the hip joint.
3. Ongoing lameness/abnormal walking/unwillingness to jump – sometimes despite the surgery being performed correctly and there being no pain associated with the hip, the false joint does not work as well as the normal hip resulting in a limp or weakness which is not painful, but still noticeable. This is disappointing when it happens, and the best way to try and improve the situation is to work hard on strengthening the area. A physiotherapist may be able to help with specific exercises to strengthen the area.

There is a small risk associated with a general anaesthetic. Your vet may discuss with you whether you would like your dog to have a blood test prior to surgery to ensure that there are no underlying health problems that we were unaware of.

Thank you for entrusting the care of your pet to us.

**Dr Nick Goldfinch BVMS PhD PgC(Surg) GPCerts(SAS, SAM) MRCVS**