

**OPERATING ON BOTH LEGS UNDER A SINGLE ANAESTHETIC (Bilateral procedures):**

*applies to:*

- **TPLO (Tibial Plateau Levelling Osteotomy) for Cranial Cruciate Ligament Injury**
- **Medial Patellar Luxation (dislocating kneecap)**

In some circumstances, we will consider performing surgery on both legs of an animal under one anaesthetic where there are problems with both sides. The main examples of this are for bilateral cruciate ligament problems and bilateral dislocating kneecaps.

While we are happy under certain circumstances to offer bilateral surgery under one anaesthetic, we generally reserve this for exceptional circumstances. We would normally recommend doing the worse side first, then the second side 6 weeks later. This means that both anaesthetics and procedures are shorter and the patient is recovering from surgery on one leg at a time.

The main advantage of bilateral surgery is that the patient only has to undergo one period of exercise restriction during recovery, rather than on two separate occasions. Other advantages include quicker resolution of clinical discomfort (if present in both legs), reduced time in practice for dogs where practice visits are difficult (due to nervousness or aggression), and reduced overall cost of one procedure compared to two separate procedures. We may also consider bilateral procedures to complete a course of treatment before a particular deadline (e.g. moving abroad or insurance policy deadline).

However, it is worth bearing in mind that bilateral surgery means that the procedure is longer and more complex than two distinct single-sided surgeries. Longer surgeries tend to have a higher rate of complications, particularly wound and surgical-site infection. Similarly, the effects of a longer single anaesthetic need to be considered, and may increase the risk of a prolonged recovery or problems with kidney, liver or heart function.

Patients who have had both hind limbs operated on at the same time may find it more difficult to walk normally for the first few days after surgery. If you are going ahead with bilateral surgery for your pet, it is worth acquiring a sling (or using a rolled-up towel) to place under your pet's tummy to aid mobility. Similarly, it can be difficult for them to get into position to urinate/defecate and you may need to help them with a sling or similar in the first few days after surgery.

Prognosis for long-term recovery after bilateral surgery is expected to be the same as for staged, single-sided surgery, but it is important to be aware of this increased risk of short-term complications and increased need for nursing and supportive care in the immediate post-operative period, both in practice and at home.

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