



Taking care of your pets cast or dressing

The main takeaway message from this advice sheet is ...

KEEP THE BANDAGE OR CAST CLEAN AND DRY!

To help, use a protective covering over the bandage when your pet goes outside especially if it is wet. This could be a plastic bag, few wraps of clingfilm or the makeshift covering we have given you fashioned out of a drip bag! Ensure you promptly remove this covering on returning inside to avoid excessive sweating within the dressing. Too long in plastic will cause the affected area to become hot, sticky and very unpleasant for your pet. Use tape to secure any protective covering. **NEVER USE ELASTIC BANDS!!** Restrict your pet's activity and encourage it to rest. Short lead trips into the garden for dogs, and cats should be kept inside.

The function of a bandage

Your pet may go home with a bandage or dressing to provide support or protection for the following reasons:

- Stop self-trauma of a wound while healing
- Protect the wound from the environment
- Support a fracture
- Reduce contamination of the wound
- Give comfort and pain relief of sprains, strains and sometimes dislocations



Bandage problems you may encounter

These issues can occur surprisingly easily due to the nature and lifestyles of our pets.

- **The bandage becomes wet or soiled** - This reduces ventilation through the bandage. If left on for an extended period of time, the tissues underneath can become macerated (soft) and even infected turning a small problem into a major one. **This is why your post-operative check-ups are very important!**
- **The bandage moves or slips** - If this occurs it will no longer offer the required support. The most likely cause of this will be over activity of the pet or it has chewed or licked at the dressing. Occasionally if the bandage was put on over swollen tissues and this swelling has decreased then loosening and slippage can occur
- **The bandage tightens** - This can be as a result of the dressing becoming wet or soiled. Swelling of the tissues underneath occurs which causes the bandage to tighten. This results in circulation problems with the tissues underneath and worst case scenario could result in gangrene of those tissues
- **Pressure sores over bony areas** - (elbow and hock being the most common) Sores are also a potential problem especially if a dressing is required over an extended period. These sores begin as irritated skin but can develop into deep penetrating ulcers if left untreated

What to Watch for:

Where pain or a foul smell occurs, then **urgent** attention from your vet should be sought. If toes that extend beyond the dressing swell up, then immediately remove or loosen the bandage and contact the surgery straight away. Let us know if your pet suddenly becomes distressed (eg. licking and chewing at the bandage) and they react painfully when handling them. Try and stop your pet from chewing the dressing. Socks over the top can help, and if necessary we can provide you with a 'cone of shame' for the persistent chewers!

Always err on the side of caution, as pets can't talk. Concerned? Then get it checked!