

Bandage/Cast Care

Bandages, splints & casts are often used in small animals, for example to cover open wounds, to reduce postoperative limb swelling and to support injured bones/joints. The vast majority of bandages do not cause any problem at all but a poorly maintained bandage can cause complications. These may be mild, such as a slight sore resulting from the bandage rubbing on the skin, or may be more serious, such as full-thickness skin wounds, which can be problematic and costly to treat. In the worst case scenario a poorly applied and maintained bandage can result in constriction of the blood supply to the limb resulting in irreversible damage that may require amputation. We will endeavour to always apply a properly constructed bandage or cast to your pet's limb but we can not be responsible for what happens to the bandage after your pet has been discharged or if the bandage is changed elsewhere. For this reason there are a few simple instructions to follow and signs to look out for to ensure that your pet's bandage does not cause a problem.

The bandage must always be kept clean, dry and intact. A plastic bag should be taped over the foot when your pet is taken outside to ensure the bandage remains dry. However, this bag should not be left on permanently because your pet's foot will become sweaty. Often the pads/claws of your pet's toes will be visible, in which case you should examine them at least twice daily for signs of swelling or cold. You should also check, at least twice daily, for:

- If the bandage is wet
- If the bandage has slipped or twisted in anyway
- If there is any sign of discharge seeping through the bandage or if it smells bad
- If your pet stops putting weight on the foot or seems distressed by the bandage in any way

Most animals are expected to walk on their bandaged leg. If your pet has been walking happily on the leg but starts to hop or limp on that leg this may be because there is a painful sore under the bandage. Animals may also start to chew the bandage if the leg is painful underneath.

If you notice any of these things, the bandage should be checked by a vet as soon as possible. Equally importantly, you must keep to scheduled bandage changes. As a general rule, bandages should be checked by a vet at least weekly and often more frequently than this. We are always happy to offer advice if you do have any concerns.

