Sacroiliac Luxation in Cats and Dogs

What is Sacroiliac Luxation?

Sacroiliac luxation happens when the connection between the spine and pelvis shifts out of place, often due to trauma like a fall or accident. This injury can make it painful and difficult for pets to move and can affect the nerves that control the hind legs or even the bladder function.

Who is Affected?

- Dogs: About 25% of cases are on both sides (bilateral). Most dogs with this injury also have other serious orthopaedic injuries (such as fractures) affecting one or both hind legs.
- Cats: About 20% of cases are bilateral, and it's the second most common pelvis injury for them. Nerve issues are common, but around 80% recover nerve function in 3–4 months.

Signs to Watch For

1.Pain and Discomfort: Pain in the hip, lower back, or pelvic area, often shown by sensitivity when touched or difficulty sitting or lying comfortably.
2.Limping or Lameness: Pets may limp or favour one side, struggling to bear weight on one or both hind legs.
3.Weakness in the Hind Limbs: Decreased strength or coordination, which can lead to a wobbling or unstable gait.
4.Swelling or Bruising: In some cases, there may be visible swelling or bruising around the pelvic region.
5.Reduced Mobility: Pets may be reluctant to jump, climb stairs, or engage in normal activities due to discomfort and instability.
6.Changes in Posture: Some pets might stand with a shifted posture to compensate for the instability in the pelvis.
7.Nerve-Related Symptoms: Since SI luxation can impact nearby nerves, there can be symptoms like loss of sensation in the hind limbs or reduced muscle tone in more severe cases.

Treatment Options

1.One-Sided (Unilateral) Luxation:
- -The preferred treatment is placing one or two screws from the pelvis into the sacrum (part of the spine) to secure the joint.
- -Screws are chosen based on the pet's size, with larger dogs needing bigger screws.

2.Both-Sided (Bilateral) Luxation:
- -Options for fixing both sides include:
  - Dual Screws: Using two screws (one on each side).
  - Toggle Suture (SILF): A type of suture that lets the joint retain some natural movement.
- -Fluoroscopy (a live X-ray) is often used to guide screw placement safely.

When Surgery Might Be Needed

- Narrowed Pelvic Canal: If the canal narrows too much, it can lead to issues like constipation.
- Misaligned Hip Joint: Surgery can help correct alignment issues to support better mobility.
- Severe Pain or Other Fractures: Surgery can help pets recover faster and reduce pain.

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Surgical Complications and Risks

Surgery for SI luxation aims to stabilize the pelvis and promote healing, but as with any surgery, there are potential risks and complications. Some possible issues include:

1.Infection: As with any surgical procedure, there is a risk of infection, which may require antibiotics or additional treatment to resolve.

2.Implant Loosening or Failure: Screws or implants may loosen or fail to hold, especially if the pet is very active before full healing. This can lead to recurrent instability and may necessitate further surgery.

3.Nerve Injury: Due to the proximity of the sciatic and other nerves, there's a risk of accidental nerve damage, which could result in temporary or, in rare cases, permanent weakness or loss of sensation in the hind limbs.

4.Pelvic Canal Narrowing: In cases where the pelvic canal is compromised, surgery must carefully address alignment. Improper alignment could lead to a narrowing of the pelvic canal, causing chronic issues like constipation due to compression.

5.Delayed Healing: Healing times can vary, and in some cases, the healing process may be slower than expected, especially if other orthopaedic injuries are present.

6.Pain and Lameness Post-Surgery: Some pets may continue to experience pain or lameness even after surgery, which may require ongoing management, physiotherapy, or pain relief medication.

Aftercare and What to Expect Post-Surgery

After SI luxation surgery, careful at-home management is crucial to ensure proper healing and minimize the risk of complications. Immediately following surgery, your pet may need to stay at the veterinary hospital for monitoring and pain control. Once home, follow these guidelines for recovery:

• Restricted Activity: For the first 4–6 weeks, pets should have restricted activity to avoid putting strain on the surgical repair. Limit your pet's movement to short, supervised leash walks and avoid stairs, jumping, or running.

• Pain Management: Your veterinarian will likely prescribe pain relief medication, which should be given as directed to keep your pet comfortable. Monitor for any signs of pain, such as restlessness, whining, or decreased appetite, and consult your vet if concerns arise.

• Wound Care: Check the surgical site daily for any signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, or discharge. Avoid letting your pet lick or chew the area and use an e-collar if necessary.

• Follow-Up Appointments: Regular check-ups, typically including follow-up X-rays, are essential to ensure the surgical site is healing well. These appointments allow your vet to assess bone stability and confirm if further restrictions are needed.

• Physical Rehabilitation: After the initial healing period, your vet may recommend a gradual return to activity, potentially with physical rehabilitation exercises to restore strength and flexibility.

What to Expect in Recovery

Pets typically regain mobility gradually, and many show significant improvement in comfort and stability within a few weeks to months. You may notice some stiffness at first, especially after resting, but this generally improves with time. Most pets can return to normal activity after around 8–12 weeks, but the exact timeline depends on the individual's progress and other orthopaedic conditions.

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