



Cage Rest for Spinal Cord Injury

The phrase “cage rest” is used to describe a period (usually 4 weeks) of confinement following spinal injury. Animals are typically kept in the cage at all times, except when they are under the immediate supervision of owners or need to eliminate. Running, jumping, and rough play are prohibited during cage rest. In addition, walking around the home for excessive periods of time – even under supervision – is discouraged. While these recommendations seem strict, they are made to facilitate proper healing following injury.

Why Cage Rest is Important

During certain spinal cord injuries and following spinal surgery, the structures that support vertebrae can be injured. The disk, a structure that acts as a cushion between vertebrae, is particularly slow to heal. Excessive activity can damage supporting structures and lead to spinal pain, weakness, and spinal instability. Rest, however, needs to be combined with a physical rehabilitation plan.

Guidelines

- Your pet must be kept in a cage or kennel at all times, except when undergoing physical rehabilitation, using the restroom, or sitting beside you under your immediate supervision.
- The kennel or cage should be large enough for your animal to stand up and turn around but not larger than that.
- Even if your pet is recovering very well, is walking normally, and pain free before the 4 week period of exercise restriction is complete, please complete the full course of cage rest.
- Please take your pet on slow leash walks so they can eliminate outdoors, for about 5 minutes at a time (less if they seem tired), 3-4 times a day.
- If your pet seems to remain comfortable, slowly increase the walk duration to about ten minutes after surgical staple removal.
- At no point should your pet be off their leash, run, play, go up and down stairs or jump on and off furniture.
- Permanent life style changes that have been speculated to reduce the recurrence of disk herniation and other spinal injuries include: weight restriction, reduction in high impact activities (rough play with other dogs, jumping on and off of furniture, etc)
- Please carefully observe your pet to ensure that they are continuing to regain neurologic function and can void urine voluntarily. If you are at all concerned, please do not hesitate to contact us. (979)-845-2351