



# SKIN

## SOFT TISSUE RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY

### **What is soft tissue reconstruction?**

Broadly speaking, soft tissue reconstruction involves fixing a wound or open area of skin through use of surgical techniques including skin flaps, skin grafts and specific surgical tools.

### **Why would we need to consider reconstructive surgery?**

Most commonly, reconstructive surgery is necessary due to the size of a wound/lump or due to the difficult location of a wound/lump.

If there is going to be a very large area that requires surgical closure of a lump is removed then it may not be possible to simply suture the skin edges back together and a reconstructive technique will be necessary. Similarly, if the lump or wound is in a difficult location, such as on the foot, near the eyes/mouth or near the anus, then removing the lump without reconstructive techniques may cause abnormalities to how these areas function and cause significant cosmetic defects.

### **What is the goal of reconstructive surgery?**

The goal of reconstructive surgery is to provide a better chance of healing and to reduce the risk of wounds breaking down from being too tight.



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### What risks are associated with surgery?

There are risks associated with all procedures that are performed in veterinary surgery. It is important to understand the risks associated with the procedure being performed and what that may lead to.

### General Reconstructive Surgery Complications

1. Infection is a risk with almost every surgery that is performed. The risk is very low in most practices however will be seen as discharge or pus from the surgery site during the weeks after surgery. For reconstructive surgery, infection increases the risk that the wound may not heal adequately and may potentially open if infection occurs.
2. Swelling is a common complication with reconstructive surgery that we manage with many techniques. Bandaging, drains and special suturing techniques will be used when necessary. Some animals will however still develop some swelling which it is important for you to advise your veterinarian of if this occurs. Swelling increases the risk that a surgery will not heal as expected and may open up if severe.
3. Pain can occur when dealing with very large skin surgeries. Your clinic will dispense pain relief as indicated but if you feel that your patient is still uncomfortable then it is important to reach out to your veterinarian to discuss options.