

Joint Arthrodesis Advice Sheet

What is it?

Arthrodesis is a salvage ("last resort") procedure that involves the surgical "fusion" of a joint.

It can be used in many joints, such as the carpus (wrist) or tarsus (ankle) and may be performed to treat severe osteoarthritis, infection or conditions that cause joint instability such as complicated fractures, dislocations or injuries to a joint's supporting soft tissues (e.g. muscles / tendons).

- The aim of the procedure is to create a comfortable, stable joint but fusing the joint results in loss of its range of movement
- Partial and complete joint arthrodesis techniques exist depending on the joint affected
- Arthrodesis or joint fusion will result in an altered gait in the affected limb, which is variable depending on the joint fused
- Arthrodesis involves removing the cartilage covering the bones that will be fused, and using a bone graft to fill the remaining space
- The joint is then stabilised using metal internal implants, or an external fixator

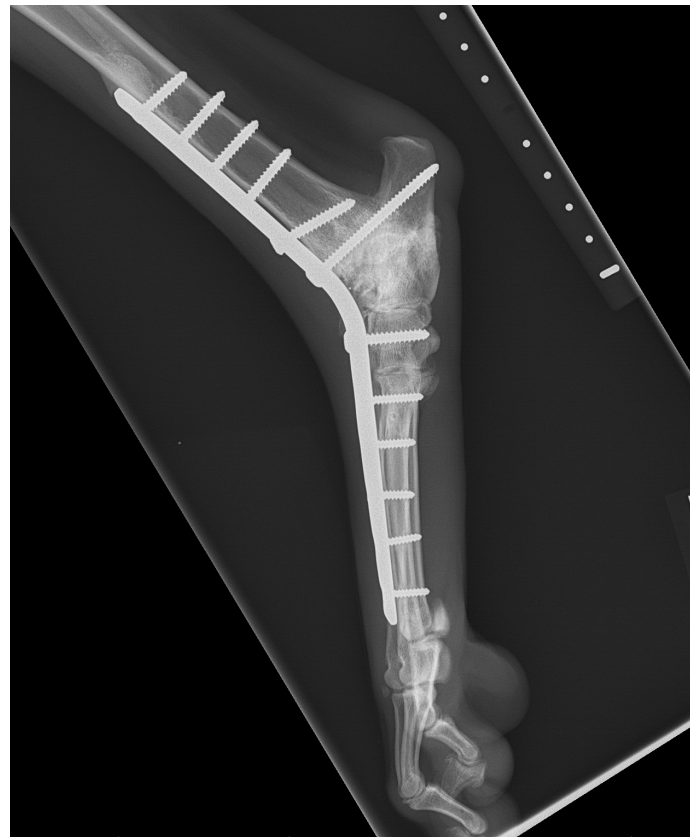
What is the aftercare following surgery?

Patients undergoing arthrodesis may wear a dressing or splint for additional support during the initial healing period; please see our further instructions on dressing / cast / splint care.

Healing of the arthrodesis site is checked by taking x-rays at 6 weeks postoperatively and subsequently with x-rays at approximately 12 weeks post-operatively.

A gradual exercise programme and physiotherapy can be started once healing is confirmed.

Arthrodesis is a significantly invasive surgery; possible complications include infection, fracture, implant failure, persistent joint instability, ongoing lameness and complications related to the use of dressings/splints (e.g. dressing sores).



Tarsal arthrodesis in a dog

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