

**CLAIM OF
THE MONTH****FALL-RELATED TRAUMA****Pet:** Ace* a 1-year-old male cat**ACE'S STORY:**

Ace escaped out the patio door of his family's apartment and followed the Autumn sun rays to the sixth-floor balcony. Unfortunately, disaster struck! With all the stimulation that the outdoors had to offer, Ace lost his footing and fell to the ground below. When his worried family reached him, he seemed stunned and fearful, and he didn't want to move or eat.

He was brought to the emergency veterinary hospital where the veterinary team looked him over thoroughly. They watched him closely for limping or abnormal movements, took note of his mental status, listened to his chest, observed his breathing closely and they felt his limbs, spine and abdomen, looking for painful areas. Throughout this examination, it was clear Ace's breathing was shallow and rapid and he had cuts and abrasions on his back legs. Pain medication was given as soon as possible while x-rays and ultrasound imaging were used to evaluate Ace's chest, abdomen and skeleton for injuries.

ABOUT THE CONDITION: FALLS AND "HIGH-RISE SYNDROME"

Cats, especially young ones are prone to injuries from falling. When an animal falls from a height greater than two meters, veterinarians refer to the expected collection of injuries as "high-rise syndrome." They must consider all of the possible injuries that can occur from such a fall. Broken bones are common, but vets will also look for head injuries, dental or jaw fractures, internal bleeding and bruising, organ damage and even spinal injuries.

Damage to the lungs can be especially dangerous after falls. Lung abnormalities like pulmonary contusions (bruising), and pneumothorax (development of air pockets) can impair the lungs' ability to expand and exchange gasses, leading to oxygen deprivation and even death. The presence of these injuries can be revealed two to three days after a fall.

When an animal first arrives at the hospital, veterinarians will observe them for signs of neurological changes that might indicate a head injury. From there, any potential fear or pain is addressed with medication. Finally, oxygen support can be given if needed while the team performs a more thorough examination. The goal is to evaluate for fractures, bruising, pneumothorax, internal bleeding and neurological injuries.

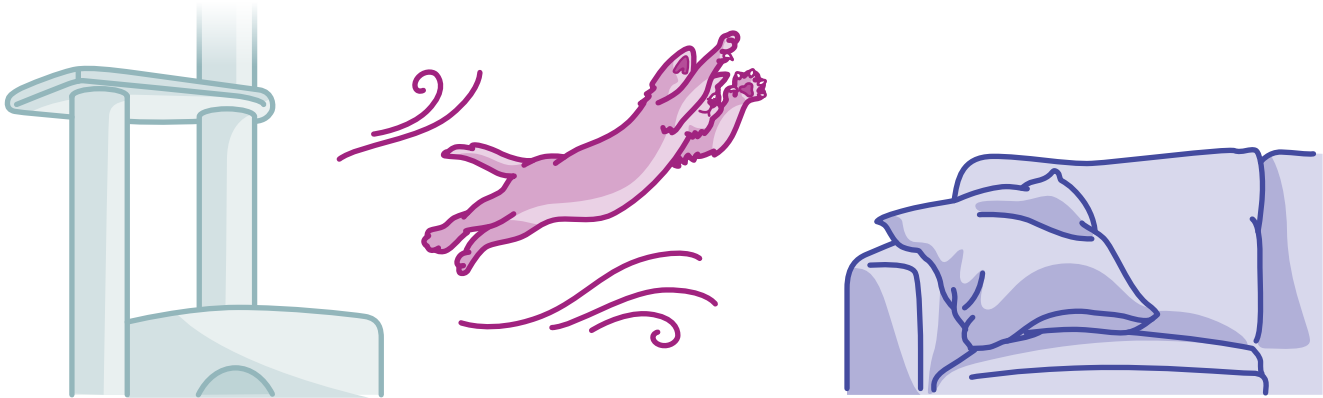
The veterinary team will often want to observe a fall victim for at least 48 hours and sometimes longer depending on the injuries the patient has sustained. Even "normal" looking animals can develop clinical signs related to head trauma, lung trauma and blood loss in the hours after the incident. Serial tests and imaging are prudent.



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TREATMENT

Fortunately, Ace’s mouth and jaw appeared normal, his x-rays didn’t reveal any bone fractures and an ultrasound of his abdomen did not reveal any free fluid that could indicate internal bleeding. However, Ace’s chest wasn’t so lucky. X-ray and ultrasound imaging showed some bruising on both sides of his lungs as well as a small area of pneumothorax, which explained his fast and shallow breathing. It was determined that Ace would need hospitalization over the next day or so, to deliver supplemental oxygen and make breathing easier. This also allowed doctors to provide comprehensive pain control and perform re-check imaging to make sure his lung injuries were not worsening. The wounds on Ace’s back legs were also cleaned and stitched and antibiotics were given to prevent infection.

After 24 hours, Ace was able to breathe easily without the additional oxygen and his test results showed that none of his lung injuries were progressing. He was discharged to his grateful owners with pain medication, antibiotics and strict instructions to rest.

CLAIM OUTCOME

Pets Plus Us pack member, Ace, is expected to recover well following expert care after his dramatic fall. He needed more than \$2,251.27 in veterinary care and monitoring after the accident.

His family was reimbursed, \$1,826.14** through their Pets Plus Us Accident and Illness Max plan.

We wish you a speedy recovery, Ace!

*Name changed for privacy

**Source: 2022 PTZ Insurance claims data. Value of claims in \$ CAD.

