**Exploratory Laparotomy**

Aim: To explore the abdominal contents of the animal.

1. Make an incision in the paralumbar fossa, ensuring the incision is large enough for the surgeon’s arm.
2. There are 6 layers to incise through: the skin, the subcutaneous fat, the external and internal oblique muscles, the transversus and the peritoneum.
3. The abdominal organs must be identified and examined for abnormalities in the following order:
   1. The duodenum, should be in the dorsal third of the incision
   2. The right kidney, should be cranial to incision
   3. The liver, should be cranial to the 13th rib
   4. The gallbladder, which should be ventral to the caudal border of the liver
   5. The diaphragm, which should be in the cranial abdomen, near the ventral extent of the caudal liver border
   6. The reticulum, which should be below the caudal border of the liver
   7. The falciform ligament, which is in the ventral peritoneum
   8. The left kidney, which is in the ventral compartment of the abdomen
   9. The omasum, which is behind the omental curtain on the ventral aspect of the right rumen wall
   10. The left gastric artery, which should be on the dorso-cranial surface of the omasum
   11. The intestines, palpated for gas, loops, foreign bodies
   12. The left compartment of the abdomen, palpated for signs of peritonitis
   13. The spleen, along the cranial ribcage
   14. The rectum, in the centre of the pelvic canal
4. If the surgery is to be continued, do not suture.
5. If the surgery is complete, the peritoneum and transversus abdominus muscles are sutured in a simple continuous pattern.
6. The internal and external abdominal oblique muscles should be sutured in a simple continuous pattern.
7. The skin should be sutured with a ford interlocking suture.