



Anesthesia

Anesthesia seems like a scary concept, but it's low risk for most pets. Because pets won't just stay still when we ask them to, veterinarians rely on sedation or anesthesia to perform many needed procedures. Since anesthesia eliminates pain and fear, we can do procedures more thoroughly and quickly, thus allowing your pet to have a more successful outcome.

Anesthesia means the absence of consciousness and pain sensations. There are several options available to achieve this. However, many steps come before giving anesthesia in order to decrease any risks.

Exam and Blood Tests

Your pet should have an exam and blood work performed within a two-week window before the procedure. This allows the doctor to determine if it is safe for your pet to receive anesthesia.



The doctor will also use this information to tailor the anesthesia protocol specifically to your pet. For example, the liver breaks down most anesthesia drugs. If your cat or dog has some liver damage, they will need a lower dose of medicine since their body does not break it down as quickly.

Preparation

The night before anesthesia, your pet should not eat anything 12 hours before the procedure (unless directed by your veterinarian). This helps to prevent your pet from vomiting during anesthesia. Vomiting during anesthesia can cause serious complications because the material may get into the lungs. In emergencies, we may give your pet medicine to empty the stomach beforehand to avoid this complication.

The morning of the anesthesia, we will give your pet a sedative to relax. An animal that is calm and relaxed before anesthesia has an easier time going under anesthesia and a less stressful time waking up. This medicine may contribute to your pet being drowsy when they go home.

We will place an intravenous (IV) catheter usually in a front leg. This allows your pet to receive fluids while under anesthesia to protect the kidneys and keep the blood pressure up. It is also used to give medicine directly into the vein for anesthesia itself and during an emergency.

Anesthetized

Once your pet is properly prepared, your pet is anesthetized. The most commonly used anesthesia is in a gas form. Your pet will have a tube placed in the throat for oxygen and anesthesia gas. The amount of anesthesia your pet receives is closely monitored and adjusted as needed. Once fully under anesthesia, the doctor will perform the necessary procedure.

During anesthesia, trained assistants will closely monitor your pet's vital signs. Heart rate, breathing rate, and blood pressure are just a few of the values we watch. Using this information, we adjust anesthesia as needed.



A warming blanket is also under or around your anesthetized pet since anesthesia causes the body's temperature to drop.

Waking Up

We stop the anesthetic gas once the procedure is completed. Your pet will wake up disoriented. Our veterinary team will continue to monitor and comfort your pet as he or she wakes up. This can take minutes to hours depending on several factors such as length of anesthesia, sensitivity to anesthesia, and type of medicines given.

More often than not, your pet can go home the same day as the anesthetic procedure. The doctor may decide additional monitoring is necessary and may direct you to an overnight emergency clinic.



At Home

At home, your pet will likely be very tired. After all, they are used to sleeping most of the day, but while at the clinic, they are often on alert. Some pets will have a voracious appetite while others don't want to eat until the next day. Similarly, some pets may have a bowel movement right away while others may not for another 24-48 hours.

If your pet seems overly tired or if you think he is in pain, call us. If you think your pet responded poorly to the anesthesia or pain medicine, it is important that you let us know so we can mark your pet's file for future reference. This will help us avoid problems in the future.

Remember

When the doctor advises anesthesia, she has your pet's best interest at heart. The risk is often greater from not doing the recommended procedure than the risk from anesthesia. Discuss any concerns you have with the doctor.