

# When Your Pet Needs Anesthesia

## What will the Anesthesiologist Need to Know?

You will be asked important questions about your pet's general health, if he or she has had difficulties with anesthesia in the past, or has trouble exercising. The internal organs of greatest concern are the brain, liver, kidneys, heart, and lungs. Blood tests may be ordered before anesthesia to evaluate how well these systems are functioning prior to anesthesia and surgery. Knowing how well a patient's internal organs are functioning will help the anesthesiologist plan your pet's anesthesia. Anesthesiologists are trained to administer anesthetics safely to patients who are sick, injured, pediatric, geriatric, or healthy.

## Will My Pet Receive any Medication before Surgery?

Trips to the hospital, unfamiliar people, smells, and other animals can be quite stressful. Most patients require mild sedation to calm them and decrease stress before surgery. After reviewing your pet's medical history and performing a physical examination on the day of surgery, the anesthesiologist will determine which medications, if any, will be given. After your pet is calm, your pet's leg will be shaved and an intravenous catheter will be placed. Your pet will receive medicines and fluids through this catheter during surgery.

## How will My Pet be Given Anesthesia?

Most commonly, general anesthesia is started by an intravenous injection. The choice of drugs used to begin and maintain your pet's anesthesia will be made based on many factors. Different patients awaken from anesthesia at different rates. Some pets may be fully alert when they arrive in the recovery room, others may be groggy for hours after surgery. Although operations are much safer now, they still produce stress on the body and may cause your pet to feel "sick". Vomiting is occasionally a side effect after anesthesia and surgery.

## **What should I Expect?**

Although anesthetics can provide pain relief and loss of consciousness during an operation, they can have side effects. Most commonly, there are changes in circulation and breathing. Veterinary anesthesiologists are specially trained to ensure that these anesthetic effects are minimized so there are no long lasting effects after the surgery.

## **How is Pain Controlled after Surgery?**

The anesthesiologist will be responsible for pain control in the immediate post-operative period. Although "pain-killing" injections are commonly used, other methods of providing analgesia may be used such as epidural or local nerve blocks. Relieving the pain and stress associated with the surgical procedure is a priority for the anesthesiologist. Anesthesiologists are specifically trained to manage pain.