



Dogs' Homes of Tasmania

Operated by the Tasmanian Canine Defence League.
Locations at Hobart, Devonport, & Burnie.

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Love this dogshome

Caring for Dogs~ Maintaining Health & Wellbeing

So your Pet is having Surgery

Increase your awareness of what occurs when your pet is admitted to a vet hospital for surgery



Routine Surgery

This refers to common procedures such as desexing, teeth, cleaning and lump removals. For routine surgeries, pets are often dropped off at the clinic without a formal consultation and then picked up the same or next day after surgery has been performed.

However a consultation or pre-operative health check should be considered. Why?;

- To confirm your pet's well being
- To give you peace of mind
- To update worming/vaccinations

Lead up to Surgery

Just as for humans, a period of fasting is necessary. No food or water should be given to your pet for approximately 12 hours before surgery, to ensure the stomach and upper intestine are empty. If the stomach is empty there is less chance of vomiting.

Before your pet is anaesthetized it is usually given a sedative. This helps it to relax and is found to aid in the recovery from anaesthesia after the surgery.

Anaesthetics are usually given in 3 main ways – intravenously, intramuscularly or inhaled.

The method depends on the type of anaesthetic used.

Anaesthetics

Often combinations of anaesthetics are used. Different anaesthetics have different benefits and side effects. The vet chooses one or a combination of anaesthetics based on:

- Breed (some breeds can't tolerate certain anaesthetics very well)
 - Age (older pets are more sensitive to the effects of anaesthetics)
 - Condition (sick animals are more sensitive to the effects of anaesthetics, especially if they have a heart or respiratory condition)
 - Personality (aggressive pets may only let the vet use an anaesthetic given under the skin or in the muscle)
- Nature of the surgery (for example a caesarian requires an anaesthetic that won't affect the puppies too much)

What other preparations occur in the lead-up to surgery?

This largely depends on what type of surgery is being carried out as well as the general health of your pet. A drip may need to be put up before surgery is started and/or antibiotics may be given.

In a special 'prep' area, anaesthesia is induced and a tube is passed into the windpipe. The area to be operated on is clipped free of hair. The pet is then carried through to the main surgery room where anaesthesia is maintained. From the time of initial anaesthetisation and during surgery, its heart rate, respiratory rate and gum colour are closely monitored.

What happens when surgery is over?

After surgery, pets are moved to a recovery area where they can be supervised as they wake up. The animal's vital signs, (temperature, heart rate and respiratory rate are closely monitored).

What about pain control?

Depending on the procedure, pain killers may need to be given. There are many pain killers available that vary in potency. The vet will choose the appropriate one according to the needs of your pet.

Although we can never say for certain how much pain is produced by a given procedure, it is fair to assume that those kinds of operations that usually cause pain to humans, most likely cause pain to animals too.

Bringing your pet home

Your pet may still be a little groggy or sleepy when it is sent home; a good nights rest is usually all that's needed.

Rest may be recommended for a longer period depending on the procedure performed. For example, bone surgery to fix a fracture often requires strict rest for at least 4 weeks while the bone heals.

If your pet goes home on the same day that surgery was performed, it will usually be allowed to eat and drink small amounts.

Most surgeries involve skin sutures, (stitches). Animals are often tempted to lick and chew at skin stitches. This can prevent the area from healing properly. You need to observe your pet closely and take steps if excessive licking starts. A firm voice when you see your pet lick it's stitches or a bitter tasting agent, (Woundguard or Bittravet) applied to the area may deter licking.

In some cases, a specially designed collar that extends past the animals nose and prevents access to the area may be required. The vet will organize this if necessary.

Stitches need to be removed by the vet after 10 – 14 days. It is a good opportunity for the vet to recheck the animal and ensure that surgery has healed well.

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