

Surgery Information

As pet owners, we often feel anxiety when our pets need surgery. We want to be sure that our pets are in a safe environment where they will be treated with compassion and expertise. How do I know if my pet is getting the best care? Will my pet be safe? These are good questions to ask. Often people search for a veterinary hospital based on lowest cost. If that is your criteria, you may be neglecting to offer your pet the safest surgical procedure and run a higher risk of complications.

At Rivertown we have looked at these risks and have put into place procedures that are consistent with the highest standards of the profession. Corners should not be cut when it comes to safe anesthesia and surgery.

Exam: Prior to surgery your pet should have a comprehensive exam by a veterinarian. We will determine if your pet is healthy or has any underlying health issues that need to be addressed prior to the procedure. A complete history, including information regarding past surgeries and your pet's age and breed, will help minimize risk. This is the time to address your concerns or any fears you may have with surgery or anesthesia.

Preanesthetic blood screening: Our pets can't tell us when they aren't feeling well or if there is something wrong. The preanesthetic blood work is an important tool for us to evaluate your pet for underlying problems with infection, dehydration, kidney or liver disease, anemia or other blood or clotting problems, electrolyte abnormalities or even cancer.

Supportive and safety measures: After your pet has been examined and is ready for surgery, there are several steps that are needed to ensure a safe procedure:

- 1. IV catheter:** An intravenous catheter is placed in one leg. The catheter allows us to give your pet fluids before and during the surgical procedure. This is important for maintaining blood pressures, keeping blood perfusion to the internal organs and allowing access for medications such as pain medications, antibiotics, induction anesthetics and emergency medications. In case of an anesthetic problem, the catheter may be life-saving.
- 2. Warming blanket:** Anesthesia will cause a sharp reduction in body temperature. The longer the procedure, the greater the risk. This may lead to slower recoveries and other complications. At Rivertown we keep your pet at a warm, physiologic temperature with the use of a heated air blanket called a Bear Hugger. Your pet wakes up warm and comfortable.
- 3. Anesthetic monitors:** While under anesthesia, a certified veterinary technician will closely monitor your pet. Using sophisticated equipment, as well as hands on attention, they will be checking blood pressures, temperature, pulse, oxygen, heart rate and respiratory rate. Reacting to changes to these parameters is important for your pet's safety.
- 4. Pain management:** There are few procedures that don't run the risk of causing pain. The steps that are taken prior to surgery are crucial for comfortable and pain-free recovery. At Rivertown we use multimodal pain management. This involves a combination of

analgesics or pain medications prior to and during the procedure, the use of local anesthetic to block pain at the surgical site and post-operative medications to go home with the pet. Staying on top of the pain is important for a quick and comfortable recovery.

- 5. Anesthetic induction and maintenance:** A combination of analgesics, muscle relaxers and induction agents, oxygen and a gas anesthetic are used to create a safe level of anesthesia. Each anesthesia is tailored to your pet's needs. Safety is our highest priority.
- 6. Surgical preparation:** In many cases we are performing surgery on areas that must remain sterile and free of contamination. We use sterile surgical techniques including clipping hair, surgical scrubs, sterile gowns, hats, masks and gloves, surgical drapes and instruments. If proper surgical techniques are employed there should be minimal risk of infection following surgery.
- 7. Post-operative recovery:** This is a crucial time for safety. Pets need to be monitored closely as they wake up from the surgery. They are kept warm, comfortable and pain-free. A period of rest and TLC in the hospital prior to discharge will allow for a safe transition to home in the afternoon.
- 8. Pain medications** are routinely prescribed for your pet's post-surgery comfort.
- 9. Detailed instructions:** At discharge you will meet with a technician or the doctor and receive a detailed instruction handout to help you with your pet's home care.
- 10. Follow-up call:** One of our customer service members will call you the day after the procedure to see how your pet is doing.
- 11. Recheck visit:** A follow-up check a couple of days after the procedure will help us monitor for any problems with the incision, pain or appetite.