



Your pet is being admitted today to undergo a surgical or diagnostic procedure. In most cases this will involve either sedation or general anaesthesia. Please read this information sheet carefully, and if you have any questions the vet or nurse who admits your pet will be happy to answer them.

### **Sedation or Anaesthesia?**

Sedation can be used for simple, short, non painful procedures such as ultrasounds and some x-rays. If your pet is sedated this will make them more relaxed and “sleepy” and is often used when we need your pet to stay still and in a specific position. It does not stop them feeling pain, but is sometimes used along with local anaesthesia (which blocks pain to a specific area) for minor painful procedures.

General anaesthetic (or GA) is used for longer and more involved procedures. Your pet will be given a pre-anaesthetic medication (premed) which helps them relax, and provides pain relief. When it is time for their anaesthetic they will be given another injection which sends them to sleep. The anaesthetic is usually maintained using drugs given as gases, which are administered via a tube into their airways, along with oxygen. When the procedure is complete, we turn off the anaesthetic gas and they wake up, but are often sleepy for a while afterwards.

For both sedation and anaesthesia your pet is likely to have a patch of hair clipped on their leg for us to give them their injection or place a catheter. They are also likely to have quite a large patch of hair clipped at the site where the procedure is carried out. Sometimes this can look a little alarming, but rest assured, it should grow back just fine!

### **What are the risks?**

As with any medical procedure, there is a small risk when an animal is given either a sedation or anaesthetic. The risks can vary in severity, from minor risks such as a prolonged recovery with excessive sleepiness, to more serious risks such as regurgitation of stomach contents and subsequent aspiration pneumonia, anaphylactic reactions, or even death. The risk of death under anaesthetic is 1 in 2000 for healthy dogs, 1 in 1000 for healthy cats and 1 in 130 in healthy rabbits. Many experts put the risk of anaesthetic death at less than the risk of driving to and from the hospital to have the anaesthetic procedure. The risks are very slightly higher in animals over the age of 12, and higher in animals that are sick, and your vet can discuss your pet's individual case with you.

Other risks are specific to the procedure that is being carried out, and will be discussed with you by the vet or nurse admitting your pet.

## **What is done to reduce the risks?**

The drugs that are used for your pet's sedation, premed or anaesthetic will be chosen by their vet based on their individual circumstances, and are used to minimise the risks of the anaesthetic. While your pet is under anaesthetic, they will be constantly monitored by a trained Veterinary Nurse, who will use anaesthetic monitors to assess several different values such as heart rate and rhythm, respiratory rate, carbon dioxide levels, blood oxygen levels, blood pressure etc. Most anaesthetised animals will have a tube placed to protect their airways while they are asleep, and all anaesthetised animals will have an intravenous catheter placed so that we can give them medication quickly if needed.

## **Pre-anaesthetic blood test**

The vet or nurse admitting your pet will offer you a pre-anaesthetic blood test. This is run in our in-house lab on the morning of your pet's procedure so we get the results very quickly. It is designed to pick up underlying disease which we are not already aware of. It is not a complete screen, but particularly focuses on the liver and kidneys, as those are the organs involved in metabolising the anaesthetic drugs. We recommend that this blood test is performed in older animals, but it is available to all pets. If you would like us to run this blood test, or you have any questions about it, please discuss it with the vet or nurse, who can also tell you about the financial cost.

## **Peri-operative fluids**

One of the things that we can do to reduce your pet's risk under anaesthetic is to put them on intravenous fluids while they are under general anaesthetic (also called putting them on a drip). This helps to support your pet's organs (particularly the kidneys) while they are under the influence of the anaesthetic drugs. Your vet or nurse will discuss with you if this would be of benefit to your pet.