



# SILVER LAKE ANIMAL PRACTICE

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## GENERAL SURGERY PROCEDURES

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The following information helps explain what to expect when you bring your pet in for surgery. After reading this information we hope that you will understand our commitment to providing your pet with the highest level of care while giving you the best value for your money. We have decided that providing your pet with the safest surgery possible is more important than offering “cheap” surgery.

- **Pre-Operative Preparation:** Preparing for surgery actually begins at home. You can feed your pet as usual the night before surgery, but they should not have access to food after midnight. Do not restrict access to water before surgery. If your pet is on any medications give them as usual unless instructed otherwise.
- **Admission:** After your pet is admitted to the hospital a physical exam will be performed to make sure they are in good general health. If you have any specific concerns (like itchy ears) please mention them when dropping off for surgery. If we notice any fleas or ticks on your pet at the time of admission they will need to be treated to protect our other patients. There will be an additional charge for this treatment.
- **Anesthesia:** Once your pet is “cleared” for surgery we start by administering medications that help prevent pain, calm, and relax the patient. Although numerous anesthetic agents are available we only select the safest, most effective products available. For most procedures we administer “Propofol” which is recognized as one of the safest anesthetics in veterinary and human medicine. This medication quickly induces general anesthesia and is easily removed from the body. Once general anesthesia is induced an endotracheal (ET) tube is placed in the windpipe to deliver oxygen directly to the lungs. Isoflurane is mixed with the oxygen to keep the pet anesthetized for as long as necessary. By using this form of anesthesia we can control how long and how “deep” the patient is anesthetized. After the procedure is complete the Isoflurane is turned off and the pet is allowed to breathe oxygen as the anesthetic is removed from their body. This combination of pre-emptive pain control and anesthetic regimen allows our patients to be comfortable, yet “wake-up” quickly from anesthesia. Most of the time they can go home the same day.
- **Monitoring:** Even though we are using safe anesthetics we want to closely monitor how your pet’s system is responding to the anesthetics and the effects of surgery. Many pets “appear” to be doing fine under anesthesia, but may be having dangerous changes in their blood pressure and breathing that is not evident without advanced monitoring. In some cases the damage caused while under anesthesia is not evident until much later. Therefore, we want to monitor the vital signs of your pet to be certain that the anesthesia is not causing any dangerous side effects.
  - **Human Monitoring:** Although we utilize modern technology to help monitor our surgery patients, a well trained surgical staff is the most important aspect of

monitoring a patient's well being. A trained assistant is always present to monitor your patient while the doctor is performing surgery. This allows the veterinarian to focus on the surgery and the technician to focus on the well being of your pet.

- **Breathing:** An End Tidal Carbon Dioxide (ETCO<sub>2</sub>) monitor is used to detect how frequently the patient is breathing and an alarm sounds if the pet is not breathing normally. As your pet breaths the gases are measured to ensure that the lungs are working well.
- **Heart Rate:** The heart rate is monitored throughout surgery to be sure that it is not beating too slow or too fast, which can alert us to potential problems.
- **Pulse Ox:** This machine helps determine the amount of oxygen in the blood. By monitoring the level of oxygen in the blood we are able to see how well the heart and lungs are working.
- **Blood Pressure:** Special equipment is used to monitor blood pressure while under the effects of anesthesia. Measuring blood pressure in pets is much more difficult than in people, but the information is very useful to ensure the safety of your pet.
- **Fluid Therapy:** During longer surgical procedures intravenous fluids and electrolytes are administered to help support the circulatory system and prevent dehydration.
- **Surgery:** Surgical patients benefit from strict adherence to aseptic technique. This means that we use a freshly sterilized set of instruments for each patient and brand new surgical supplies. Unused materials are disposed of rather than "saved" for the next patient. Although this may add to the cost of the surgery, it ensures that your pet does not contract an infection from other patients.
- **Pain Management:** We start to control your pet's pain before it even begins. After the physical exam and laboratory analysis are completed pain medications are administered. These medications help relax your pet prior to surgery and provide pre-emptive pain control. It has been shown that aggressive control of pain actually helps animals heal faster. The sooner pain control begins the more successful we are at stopping pain. Injectable pain medications are used while the patient is in the hospital to maximize their comfort. Patients are discharged with oral medication to continue pain management at home. In some cases multiple forms of pain management are used concurrently to provide as much comfort as possible.
- **Hospitalization:** For most routine procedures the patient is able to go home the same day that surgery is performed. In other cases the patient will benefit by staying in the hospital for continued monitoring and comprehensive pain control.
- **After Care:** For most procedures the patient should be "pampered" for a few days following surgery. This means restricted activity and close monitoring at home for signs of pain or complications associated with healing. Pets should be discouraged from licking/chewing at the surgical site. If this appears to be a problem, steps should be taken to stop it before serious complications arise. Some pets need to have bandages, "yucky" stuff, or an E-collar to stop self-mutilation. You will be given specific post-op instructions depending on the procedure that was performed.
- **Rechecks:** Some surgical procedures require regular examinations to monitor healing and check for complications. However, feel free to call or bring in your pet if you have any concerns after surgery.
- **Complications:** Any anesthetic or surgical procedure has the potential for complications that can range from mild skin irritation to cardiac arrest and death. Although anesthetic related death is extremely rare (<0.1 %) with out regimen it is still possible. The more common complications following surgery include:
  - Skin irritation from clipping the hair or the surgical scrub used to cleanse the skin.
  - Cough from windpipe irritation associated with the breathing tube being in place.

- Suture reaction – some pets will have an inflammatory reaction to the suture materials. This can be mild redness of the skin or marked swelling of the skin and tissue underneath.
- If you have concerns that your pet is having a complication associated with surgery please notify us so that we can examine your pet.
- **Recovery:** For elective procedures (spay/neuter) your pet should be fully recovered within a couple of weeks. For more invasive procedures (orthopedics, cancer, eye/ear surgery) the specific recovery and follow-up to be expected should be discussed with the veterinarian.

If you have any questions (remember there are no dumb questions) about any aspect of your pet's care please feel free to visit with one of our staff members or the veterinarian. We can make arrangements for owners to view their pet's surgical procedure via our closed circuit television system.