



GENERAL ANAESTHESIA

We appreciate your concerns because your dog has to have a general anaesthetic. This fact sheet of answers to some of the frequently asked questions we hope will help.

What is anaesthesia?

Loss of feeling or sensation. When we talk about anaesthesia today we usually imply general anaesthesia. This indicates a state of unconsciousness produced by drugs with the absence of any pain over the whole body together with variable amounts of muscle relaxation.

Do you think we are silly to be so worried?

No. You are merely concerned for your animal which is entirely normal. All anaesthetics carry some risk and each animal reacts slightly differently. Recently there have been huge improvements in safety and efficacy of anaesthetic drugs. At Chaseview we use Sevoflo, a modern anaesthetic agent that is also used in children's hospitals.

Each anaesthetic agent is tailored for the individual animal. Age, state of health, procedure etc. are all individually considered. A pre-anaesthetic blood test is recommended in dogs and cats over 8 years of age to check the function of the liver and kidneys. The results will indicate the health status of the animal. If necessary your animal will receive intravenous fluids throughout the anaesthetic, assisting the body to flush out the toxins.

Why do we have to sign an anaesthetic consent form?

We ask you to sign an anaesthetic consent form, not because we fear the worst but to emphasise that the procedure does carry some risk and that you have been made aware of this. You can rest assured that your dog will be monitored carefully throughout the procedure and the recovery period.

What happens when I bring my dog to the practice?

At the time of admittance your dog will be carefully examined to check that no problem has arisen since we last examined him, which could affect tolerance of the anaesthetic. You will be asked when your dog last ate and drank. The reason for this is that if we have to anaesthetise dogs with a full stomach, this sometimes causes problems with breathing when

relaxed under the anaesthetic. We recommend that your animal does not eat a meal after 6pm the evening before the operation and that water is removed the morning of the operation to prevent vomiting. Modern anaesthetic agents are less likely to cause sickness but a full stomach can still cause problems.

What happens next?

As part of the pre-anaesthetic examination a premedicant will be administered. Today this is usually a sedative and an analgesic. This combination ensures that your dog will not worry and will be relaxed and laid back, although still awake and aware of his surroundings.

The analgesic is administered so that when he wakes up after the anaesthetic he will not be feeling any pain or discomfort from the surgery.

What sort of anaesthetic will you give my dog?

Today there are many different types of anaesthetic agents. After the premedicant has had time to work, general anaesthesia will be induced and this usually involves an intravenous injection which is administered slowly. At Chaseview we use Propofol usually into one of the veins of the front legs although occasionally a rear limb or the jugular vein in the neck will be used. Please be aware that hair will be clipped from the area before intravenous anaesthetic is induced.

Once consciousness is lost the dog is laid on his side and an endotracheal tube is placed into his windpipe through the larynx. This is then connected via tubing to an anaesthetic machine and maintenance of anaesthesia begins. For this usually a gaseous anaesthetic (Sevoflo) is used together with oxygen. This ensures that while unconscious sufficient oxygen reaches the brain and tissues and at the same time allows controlled amounts of the selected anaesthetic agent to be administered.

These agents have a much shorter action than any of the injectable drugs and therefore anaesthesia can be controlled very much more precisely.

My dog is elderly. Will this be too much for him?

Until very recently most anaesthetic agents had profound effects on heart and respiration. The anaesthetic agents that we use at Chaseview have gone a long way to remove these risks, therefore they are suitable for animals considered previously to be at a high risk, e.g. very old animals or those with heart or chest problems.

Will my dog take very long to come round from the anaesthetic?

The aim of balanced anaesthesia today is to try to ensure that the patient is beginning to regain consciousness as he leaves the operating theatre.

Could the shock kill him?

Treatment for shock today is an integral part of anaesthesia and it is for this reason that intravenous fluids are often administered before, during and/or after the operation, especially in elderly patients. During this period the patient is monitored very carefully and respiration and heart rate in particular are checked.

If there is any aspect of the anaesthetic procedure outlined that concerns you and that you wish to discuss further, please feel free to contact us.