PRE-OPERATIVE GUIDELINES FOR PET OWNERS

(routine surgery)

1. On the day

You will be given an admission appointment in the morning of the day of your pet's procedure. During the appointment we'll go through the consent form and obtain your contact details for the day. We'll contact you with an update once your pet's procedure has been completed and they are in recovery, and also arrange a discharge appointment in the afternoon/evening. If you think it will make them more secure and wish to bring your pet's favourite blanket or toy or an item of your clothing, please do so.

2. Food and water

Your pet will need to be fasted for 8-12 prior to sedation or general anaesthesia. Feed a normal meal the evening before surgery, and do not leave any food available after midnight. If your pet has an early dinner (4-5pm) or is only fed once daily in the morning, please give a small meal before you go to bed. **Important** - there is no need to remove water - your pet should have access to water at all times in order to prevent dehydration.

Puppies and kittens younger than 4 months, and small furries (guinea pigs, rabbits, rodents) should not be fasted at all - please feed as normal, including in the morning of the surgery day.

2. Brachycephalic breeds (e.g. British and French Bulldogs, Pugs, Mastiffs)

These breeds are very prone to reflux or vomiting under anaesthesia, so as a further precaution we strongly recommend (and will prescribe) using an antacid called omeprazole prior to anaesthesia. Usually one dose is given the evening before surgery, and another dose first thing in the morning of the procedure.

3. General anaesthesia risk

A general anaesthetic always carries a small level of risk, even in pets who are young and physically healthy. We minimise this risk by:

- performing a thorough physical examination within 4 weeks prior to surgery, and one more time on the morning of the surgery after your pet has been admitted

- careful monitoring of anaesthetic depth, vital signs, blood pressure, ECG, oxygen and carbon dioxide levels during the anaesthesia (your pet will have a dedicated nurse with them throughout the procedure and during recovery)

- one anaesthetic protocol does not fit all patients - we carefully select different sedative and anaesthetic drugs best suited to the individual pet

- every patient will have an intravenous catheter placed for anaesthetic drug delivery, which also provides us with immediate intravenous access in case of complications or emergencies

We also offer pre-anaesthetic blood testing to check liver and kidney function, blood sugar levels, and make sure your pet is not anaemic. This test is less likely to be abnormal in a young and physically healthy pet than in an older animal, but still does uncover sub-clinical disease from time to time. Some animals are born with liver and kidney disease which may not result in any symptoms until they are older, and anaesthesia in this situation may have complications during the surgical procedure, or result in symptoms developing post-operatively.

We would encourage pre-operative blood testing in all pets coming in for routine surgery, but especially in certain breeds which are predisposed to liver or kidney disease at a young age, e.g.:

- KIDNEY DISEASE: Boxer, Basenji, Chow Chow, English Cocker Spaniel, Doberman, Golden and Labrador Retriever, Lhasa Apso, Standard Poodle, Rottweiler, Miniature Schnauzer, Shar Pei, Shih Tzu, Abysinnian cat, Siamese cat

- POLYCYSTIC KIDNEYS: Persian cat, English Bull Terrier, West Highland White Terrier

- LIVER SHUNT: Maltese terrier, Yorkshire terrier, Irish Wolfhound, Miniature Schnauzer, Himalayan cat, Persian cat, Siamese cat

- LIVER DISEASE/HEPATITIS: Springer Spaniel, Bedlington Terrier, Miniature Schnauzer, Yorkshire Terrier

Pre-anaesthetic blood testing can be performed on the day of surgery.

A genetic blood clotting disorder is seen in Dobermans and Cornish/Devon Rex cats, and should be checked for at least 24h before the first surgery they have. This test only needs to be carried out once in an animal's lifetime, there is no need to repeat the test prior to any further operations.

4. Pain relief

All surgical patients are given pain relief. It is part of the sedative injection your pet will receive prior to general anaesthesia, so it begins working before the operation begins. A second, longer lasting pain killer (anti-inflammatory) is also given.

When your pet is discharged from hospital at the end of the day, you will be given pain killers to use at home for a few days in order to ensure your pet remains comfortable while the surgical wounds are healing. If you feel that your pet needs more pain relief than has been given, please contact us so we can provide you with additional doses.

5. Intra-operative complications

Complications do very occasionally happen during anaesthesia despite all precautions. The most common problem would be low blood pressure as a result of the anaesthetic. This can damage internal organs (especially kidneys, brain and liver) and is usually easily corrected with intravenous fluids. A fee will be applied to cover the cost of fluids if this is the case.

Another possible complication would be excessive bleeding, especially during dog spays. Most common reasons for this are being in season, lungworm infection, or being overweight. In order to minimise risk of bleeding, we would advise that all dogs are administered a lungworm preventative on a regular basis, that females are spayed either before the first season or 3 months after the end of a season, and that significantly overweight females aim to lose the excess weight prior to surgery.

6. Post-operative complications

If your pet interferes with the wound, infection may develop. They could also cause the wound to break down and open up again, or a hernia to arise. For these reasons you have the option of:

- an Elizabethan collar (included in the procedure fee)

- an inflatable collar (available to buy)

- a pet medical shirt (available to buy)

We would encourage you to use this until signed off by a vet or nurse, especially when your pet is not directly supervised (especially overnight). Correction of any complications is generally charged for at the practice's standard fee schedule

We shall check the wound 2-3 days post-surgery, and also 10 days post-surgery. Any skin stitches present are usually removed at the 10 day check. There is no charge for these post-operative checks, unless your pet needs further medication (e.g. antibiotics).

We fully understand that leaving your pet with us for surgery can be a worrying and stressful time, so rest assured that we shall do everything we can to keep them safe and comfortable during their stay.

If you have any further questions or concerns about your pet's procedure, please do not hesitate to contact one of our nurses or veterinary surgeons.