



What You Need to Know Before Your Pet Has Surgery

Drop off times: Our drop off period is 7:30 AM to 8:30 AM. Admitting your pet early in the day ensures adequate time for surgical preparation. Please allow 10-15 minutes to sign a release form and leave daytime contact information. A member of our medical team will speak with you at drop off to confirm the type of procedure and see if there are any special requests (nail trims, anal gland expression) or specific questions for the surgeon.

Fasting: Please withhold food after 10 PM the evening before surgery. Free access to water should be allowed. This is for your pet's safety the day of surgery. Food and water will be offered to your pet after the effects of anesthesia have completely dissipated.

Drug Fasting: In addition to withholding food, please withhold all drugs your pet is taking the morning of surgery. If you are at all concerned about pain management before and after surgery, you can be assured that your pet will receive drugs pre and post-operatively to help with pain and anxiety. If your pet is diabetic or receiving other essential medications, please discuss these with the surgical staff.

Deposit: An itemized treatment plan with estimated costs will be provided to you at the time of drop off. 100% of this estimated cost will be required as a deposit at that time. We will refund you any unused funds at the time of discharge.

Procedure Time: Though we would like to give you a specific time when your pet will be operated on, we cannot guarantee a schedule because of possible emergencies that arise throughout the day. We will call you immediately prior to the surgical procedure to update you on your pet's progress.

Communication: If there are any concerns during surgery, we will call you immediately. The SFVS surgeon will call you as soon as your pet is awake from the procedure to discuss their findings and to let you know how your pet did during the procedure.

Overnight Stay: Your pet may stay overnight at VCA SFVS and be under the care and supervision of our emergency doctors. The SFVS surgeon will examine your pet the following morning, assess the level of recovery, and determine if another day of hospitalization is necessary. If you are interested, you are welcome to visit in the evening, however, we may discourage you from visiting if your pet needs some added rest after surgery. Please call to make arrangements before you come to the hospital for visitation. The best time for visitation is from 8 to 10 PM.

Discharge: The SFVS surgeon or the surgical staff will contact you between 9 to 10 AM on the day of discharge to arrange a time for pick-up. During discharge, you will receive detailed written instructions explaining the type of care that your pet will require at home during recovery. A member of the surgical staff will guide you through these instructions, post-op medications, and answer any outstanding questions that you may have. Please allow 30 minutes for discharge.



Miscellaneous Information For At Home Following Surgery:

- Pathology or culture results generally take about one week to receive the results. We will call you as soon as they are available. If you have not heard from us in 7 days, please call to check on the status of the tests.
- The incision will likely be bigger than you expect and will need to be re-evaluated about 14 days after surgery to ensure it has healed properly. Sutures or staples will likely be on the skin surface, although occasionally absorbable suture is used.
- Once home, it is important that your pet continues to rest and heal. This means restricting their activity level so they are not running, jumping, or playing for the two weeks following surgery. We know you cannot be with them 24/7, so using a small room or kennel is helpful to ensure their activity level is restricted when you are not there. It is recommended to go outside just for short leash walks for bathroom purposes.
- An E-collar (aka cone) or t-shirt/boxers should be used following surgery to ensure they are not able to lick or bother at the incision as this can delay healing. It is also important to keep them separated from other pets as they may try to “help” by licking the incision.
- The incision should stay clean and dry for the 2 weeks following surgery. This means no grooming or swimming until the incision has been deemed healed by a veterinarian.
- Your pet may have a decreased appetite for the first few days following surgery. This should gradually improve as they heal, however, you can entice them to eat to help as things heal. Please encourage them to eat by offering them boiled chicken or lean ground beef with rice. Cottage cheese or pasta can also be tried, however, spices or fatty foods should be avoided.
- It is not uncommon for your pet to not have a bowel movement for up to 5 days following surgery. They have likely missed a few meals because of surgery and the anesthetic medications slow down their digestion. If concerned, you can add pumpkin to their diet to increase their fiber intake.
- For cats, please use a dust-free litter, such as paper/wood or silica litters, for the two weeks following surgery. Dust from clay-based litters can disrupt healing of the surgical site.
- A cold compress can be applied to the incision area for 3 days post-surgery. Dry cold compresses (ice pack or frozen peas) can be applied 3 to 4 times a day for 10 to 15 minutes each as long as tolerated. After these 3 days, dry warm compresses (moist towel in a bag or microwave bean bags) can be applied 3 to 4 times a day for 10 to 15 minutes each as long as any redness or swelling is present. Please test the temperature on your inner wrist to ensure a safe heat before using. Do not use electronic heat sources as these are more likely to cause burns.
- Following a limb surgery, passive range of motion exercises can be performed on the effected limb to stretch the muscles and encourage limb use. This involves flexing and extending each joint in the limb 10-15 times each, 2 to 3 times per day until the limb is being used normally. Putting the limb through a bicycle motion is also a way to perform this.

