

Surgery and Your Pet

What you need to know

Surgery is a major event for your pet, and often a large financial investment for owners. For this reason, many people will shop around. But it is very important that you understand that surgery is not the same at all facilities, and therefore the price can vary widely. There are many specific questions you should ask before you schedule a surgical procedure. Below you will find a description of what we do at Four Paws Animal Hospital & Wellness Center.



What happens before surgery?

- Your pet will have a full physical exam performed to ensure that they are healthy enough for anesthesia and surgery. For example, some young pets can have heart murmurs that will make anesthesia more dangerous for them. This is also when we look for other items such as retained baby teeth or hernias that may need to be addressed while the pet is already in surgery.
- At the pre-anesthetic appointment, age appropriate bloodwork will be drawn to ensure that all organs are functioning well and can metabolize the drugs that will be used.
- We review with you the risks associated with surgery, the aftercare that will be required, and provide you with a written estimate.

What precautions are present to ensure the safety and comfort of my pet before, during, and after the surgical procedure?

- Your pet will have a tube placed in their trachea (windpipe) while under anesthesia. This keeps the airway open and allows the patient to be assisted in their breathing if needed.
- An intravenous (IV) catheter is placed in your pet's leg which allows for administration of fluids during the procedure to support circulation and for administration of emergency drugs if needed.
- Inhaled gas is used to maintain anesthesia on your pet. This is much safer than only using injectable drugs.
- Anesthesia monitoring equipment gives us continuous information about your pet's heart function, core body temperature, oxygenation of the blood, blood pressure, and respiratory rate. This allows the surgical team to respond to any abnormalities or problems as soon as they occur.
- Only highly trained personnel are involved in your pet's surgery. These individuals know how to handle both routine procedures and emergency situations.
- During the procedure itself at least three staff members are present at all times. In addition to the surgeon, a licensed veterinary technician closely monitors the pet while they are under anesthesia. Licensed technicians have passed a multiple-year formal training program, so you know your pet is in skilled hands. Finally, a second assistant is also available for further monitoring and support.
- Your pet is **never** left alone while anesthetized, even for a few seconds. Their status can change too rapidly, and therefore they need to be monitored **constantly**.
- A "crash cart" is kept fully stocked with emergency supplies in the surgical suite at all times. We routinely practice drills on how to handle various emergencies.

- Pain management is very important to us. Some facilities use little or no pain medication when surgeries are performed. We start pain medications *before* your pet is anesthetized, and we utilize several different kinds of pain management. Research has shown that this is the most effective way to keep your pet comfortable.
- We give your pet medication as soon as they arrive on surgery day to make sure they are not anxious while they are waiting.
- Anesthetized animals can quickly become hypothermic (too cold). Our hospital is equipped with a heated surgery table that evenly distributes a controlled supply of heat, and we also use warmed IV fluids to help keep them warm.
- Once your pet's surgery is finished, they slowly wake up in a heated, padded recovery area in the central part of the hospital. This allows our licensed technician and other personnel to closely supervise them. Surprisingly, many anesthesia related deaths occur *after* the surgery is done and the pet is waking up. Our approach mitigates this risk.
- We deliberately have chosen to perform fewer surgical procedures per day, so that we can avoid an "assembly line" operation that results in hurried staff and poor patient care. We give your pet individualized attention and stay with them as long as needed to make sure they are as safe as possible.

What additional surgical services are available?

- Four Paws Animal Hospital was one of the first animal hospitals in the Fredericksburg area to offer laser surgery. Our surgical laser replaces a scalpel blade anytime cutting of tissue is required. As the laser cuts, it also seals small blood vessels and nerve endings. The advantages of laser surgery include less post-operative swelling, bleeding, and pain. This option is available with almost any surgical procedure, and may be required in certain cases.
- Microchip implantation is a permanent form of identification that cannot be lost like a collar and tags. Stray pets are always scanned by shelters, veterinary hospitals, and animal control officers to quickly reunite them with their owners. Even indoor-only pets can escape, and these animals usually are not wearing any kind of identification.



What about after surgery?

- Surgery is painful. Pain medications given at the time of surgery will have worn off by the time your pet is ready to go home. Therefore, your pet will require additional oral pain medications to make their recovery as comfortable as possible and to aid in proper healing.
- Since home care is such an important part of the process, either a licensed technician or a doctor will sit down with you before your pet is discharged to review written instructions and answer any questions you may have. We will also call you the day after your pet is sent home to make sure you don't have any concerns, and to ensure that your pet is comfortable and recovering well.

Your pet's health and safety is our number one priority - see for yourself! Please visit our website (www.fourpawsonline.biz) to view a photographic slideshow of our facilities, and to view a typical surgery. Now that you know how important the details are to your pet's surgery, you can have peace of mind when your pet is at Four Paws Animal Hospital & Wellness Center.