

# Not all Spays and Neuters are Equal

*Questions that you can ask to find out what type of spay or neuter surgery your pet is going to receive.*

We understand that cost is often a factor in making decisions about your pet's health care. We want you to understand the factors that go into determining the cost of our surgical procedures. Here at Malta Animal Hospital we do everything we can to minimize your pet's stress and discomfort by performing surgical and anesthetic procedures as safely as possible.

Surgical practices and procedures can vary widely among veterinary facilities. This list of questions is designed to help you acquire information on how the surgical procedure that your pet needs will be performed. Once armed with the answers, you'll be able to compare one veterinary hospital's prices with another.

We invite you to compare our standards to any veterinary facility. Once you evaluate the level of care your pet will receive at Malta Animal Hospital we believe your decision will be clear.

## 1.) Will my pet receive intravenous fluids while under anesthesia?

Intravenous or IV fluids are very important in preventing dehydration during the procedure. They help sustain a safe blood pressure while under anesthesia which protects vital organs. Kidney damage caused by episodes of low blood pressure while under anesthesia may not show up for years! The IV catheter also allows emergency venous access in the event of cardiac arrest or other emergency situations.

## 2.) Will my pet be cared for by a Licensed Veterinary Technician while under anesthesia?

Licensed Veterinary Technicians (LVTs) are professionals similar to nurses in human hospitals. They attend an accredited college for 2-4 years and pass an examination before the State of New York will issue them a license to practice. Malta Animal Hospital employs several LVTs and all surgery/anesthesia patients are carefully monitored by a dedicated LVT from the time of pre-medication to recovery.

## 3.) Will specialized equipment such as pulse oximeter, EKG monitors and blood pressure monitors be utilized?

Anesthesia should be monitored closely at all times to ensure an animal's safety and well-being. Quality instruments such as those mentioned above aid LVTs and veterinarians in detecting changes in an animal's vital signs early and allow them to make adjustments as needed to ensure a safe smooth anesthesia. At Malta Animal Hospital, we utilize monitors to measure blood pressure, SpO<sub>2</sub> (oxygen saturation)/pulse oximetry, heart rate, respiratory rate, body temperature, ETCO<sub>2</sub> (end tidal CO<sub>2</sub>) and continuous ECG. Monitors are no substitute for careful attention, so these devices are utilized in addition to good old fashioned manual monitoring with eyes, ears, a stethoscope and a brain!

## 4.) Will my pet receive a modern, balanced anesthesia, be intubated, and breathe 100% oxygen while under anesthesia?

Everyone knows that the riskiest part of surgery is anesthesia. Balanced anesthesia allows veterinarians to minimize patient risk and maximize patient comfort and safety. The objectives of balanced anesthesia are to calm the patient, minimize pain, and reduce the potential for adverse effects associated with analgesic and anesthetic agents. Pets who receive a sedative and a pain killer even before they are put under anesthesia have less chance of complications during surgery. Pets who feel pain need more anesthesia and higher doses of anesthesia are more dangerous than lower doses. Pets undergoing any type of surgery other than very brief ones should be intubated. This prevents aspiration in case they vomit and makes it possible to breathe for the pet in emergency situations. It also allows them to breathe 100% oxygen.

## 5.) Will my pet's body temperature be maintained in a safe manner while he or she is under anesthesia?

Pets start to lose heat from their body just as soon as they are put under anesthesia. This is called hypothermia. The smaller the pet, the faster this occurs. Hypothermic pets require higher doses of anesthesia, recover slower and have more complications from anesthesia than those who are kept warm. Body temperatures can be maintained using external sources of heat while they are under anesthesia. There are many methods used to

keep pets warm while they are under anesthesia. Some depend on sophisticated equipment such as warm-water circulating pads, warm-air circulating blankets and . These types are safe in that they do not burn the patient. Much less safe are the methods that rely on human electric heating pads, hot water bottles, bags of beans or rice heated in a microwave. All of these have the potential for causing very serious burns.

6.) Will the surgery be performed in a dedicated surgical suite?

Sterility is very important during surgery. Having a special room designed for surgery to limit traffic, with airflow engineered to avoid contamination, appropriate lighting (surgical illumination), equipment, and emergency supplies aids in maintaining a sterile field for surgery, a surgical suite that is only used for “clean” surgery is a must. It can be kept much cleaner than a general purpose room that has high traffic. Pets whose surgery is done in a surgical suite have a much lower chance of developing a life threatening postoperative infection

7.) Will a separate surgical pack and surgical drape that have been sterilized by autoclaving used on every patient?

Modern standards of care say that every patient must have their own surgical pack, that this pack must be autoclaved to achieve sterility and that a new surgical drape is used on every pet. Many years ago this practice was not the standard. Instruments were used on many patients before cleaning. Instruments were not autoclaved; they were soaked in a disinfectant solution. Unfortunately, some veterinary hospitals haven't changed with the times – this question must still be asked!

8.) Will the surgeon wear a sterile cap, surgical gown, gloves and mask?

Again, years ago veterinary surgeons often wore none of those. It was not unusual for a surgeon to wear the same clothes he wore in the exam room, not wear a cap, mask or even gloves and do surgery with a cigarette in his mouth. Today the accepted standard of care is different. Those veterinarians who adhere to high standards use a different sterile gown and gloves for each and every patient and don a cap and surgical mask during every surgery.

9.) Will my pet receive pain medication?

In any modern well-run veterinary hospital, pain medication should be the rule, not an option, for any painful situation. Those hospitals that have high standard premedicate their surgical patients with pain killers even before they are put under anesthesia. This assures that the pain medication is working by the time the surgery starts. They also continue pain medications as needed while the pet is in the hospital and dispense pain medications to be used once the patient is home. Theories about pain meds being important to limit activity post-operatively have been disproven, and quite the opposite is true – outcomes and recovery are better with proper pain control!