

VETERINARY MEDICINE TODAY

Preanesthetic Testing for Pets

Today, it is almost unheard of for any person, no matter how young, to have an anesthetic procedure without first having some tests in order to minimize the risk. Similarly, it is becoming more common to have your veterinarian or veterinary technician discuss with you preanesthetic tests for your pet prior to a surgical procedure, to help ensure your pet's health and safety. So why are these recommendations being made today, as compared to years ago? Are these new tests and procedures that were not available in the past? Will this testing completely eliminate the risk of anesthesia? Should young pets that appear to be healthy undergo testing? These may be a few of the many questions that you may have and in this article I hope to address them and help you understand the importance of preanesthetic testing.

In many respects, technology in veterinary medicine has increased over the last few decades to mirror the advancements made in human medicine. These advancements have been particularly driven by client requests and increasingly higher levels of expectations, sometimes demanding that their family's pet receive a similar level of care as to what they would be provided. As these are met, the level of the standard of care for the region is raised another notch. And in today's litigious society, it is imperative that standards of care are achieved or exceeded by all practitioners, or if a problem is encountered without the proper testing, a liability issue could exist. Today, due to the availability and affordability of in-clinic diagnostic and laboratory equipment, these tests can now be performed in the office at a reasonable cost, as compared to twenty years ago when the majority of blood health profiles were sent out to state labs. In addition, there are also many outside laboratory services now available to the veterinarian, with much shorter turn-around times.

Although every test provides valuable information to the doctor when evaluating anesthesia safety, primarily to rule-out otherwise undetectable internal organ dysfunction, there is not one test or panel of tests that can guarantee complete safety with every individual every time. Even as the veterinary and human pharmaceutical companies continually improve the safety of medications, there will always remain the potential for an adverse event or reaction with a small percentage of the population.

Finally, pets of all ages should be evaluated for safety, since certain congenital or birth defects affecting the major organs can remain hidden or sub-clinical until a potentially stressful event such as illness, injury or surgery is encountered.

It is important that your veterinarian is allowed to rule out as many of these problems as possible, irregardless of the age of your pet, to help ensure a successful and safe outcome with your best friend's procedure.

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