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Why Does My Pet Have To Be Fasted Before An Anesthetic?

Fasting means that a patient must not eat any solid food for a specified period of time before an anaesthetic procedure takes place. While it can be unpleasant to not eat for extended periods of time, the importance of fasting before an anaesthetic procedure can not be emphasised enough.

Animals can often become excited or nervous when coming to the veterinary office and some of the medications administered

There are some medications that we may recommend that you not give before the planned anaesthesia event.



during an anaesthetic procedure can cause some nausea and in some cases vomiting or regurgitation.

While an animal is under gas anaesthesia, they are intubated. Intubation is the placement of a soft silicone or rubber endotracheal tube into the trachea (wind pipe). A small balloon or cuff around the tip of the endotracheal tube is gently inflated to create a tight seal between the tube and the trachea. During anaesthesia this tube prevents oxygen and gas from leaking out of the animal while breathing which allows for smooth aesthesia.

In the event that the animal regurgitates while anaesthetised, the tube prevents stomach contents from getting into the lungs. If this were to occur, a potential for life threatening aspiration pneumonia could develop. The tube stays in place until the animal is awake enough from anaesthesia to swallow on their own.

There are some instances where fasting is not possible. (ie emergency anaesthesia such as quill removal) In these instances, we like to know when your pet last ate and we take certain precautions to prevent vomiting from occurring. While regurgitation and vomiting under anaesthesia it is not a routine occurrence, it is still a risk that must be reduced before anaesthesia takes place.

At Glendale, we understand that fasting can be an unpleasant experience for both owner and pet. We try to minimize the unpleasantness by scheduling surgical procedures for the early morning, by allowing the animal to have access to water up to one hour before arrival for surgery drop off, and feeding animals as soon as possible after surgery.

We feed our surgical animals a bland but palatable canned diet specially formulated for pets with upset digestive tracts to get them eating right away and to prevent further vomiting or diarrhea associated with anaesthesia. Of course you are always welcome to supply your own food for your pet to eat once recovered from anaesthesia.

If your pet is on medications and requires an anaesthetic we may recommend that you hand pill your pet or give the medication in a very small amount of food like a coating of peanut butter or cheese whiz. In these cases, it may be necessary to medicate your pet a few hours earlier than normal to make sure the pill has in fact been ingested and is no longer in the stomach during the procedure.

There are some medications that we may recommend that you not give before the planned anaesthesia event. There are many that can be given as injections or must be given with a meal. In these cases, we can administer the medication for you, once your pet is recovered. The required fasting time varies depending on the procedure being performed, the age and the species of the pet. We will give you specific guidelines to follow at the time of booking a surgery and again the night before.