

NURSES CORNER: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOUR DOG GETS SPAYED?

When you bring your dog in first thing in the morning a vet will do a full clinical examination to ensure that she is fit and healthy for an anaesthetic, make sure she is not coming on heat and check that she has an empty stomach.

You will be offered a pre-anaesthetic blood test, to make extra sure that your dog is safe to be anaesthetised, and intravenous fluids, which reduce the risks of blood pressure dropping during her anaesthetic.

Your dog will then be admitted into the dog ward of the hospital. She will be given a premedication injection, which includes some preoperative pain relief and a sedative, to calm her prior to surgery and provide a smooth induction to anaesthesia.

Once the premedication has taken effect, a small area on her front leg is clipped and an intravenous catheter is placed into her cephalic vein. This gives us a valuable port to administer drugs and intravenous fluids.

A short-acting intravenous anaesthetic is then given, which makes her lose consciousness, and an endotracheal tube is placed down her throat. We administer oxygen and an anaesthetic gas through this tube.

From the time she is anaesthetized, until she is fully awake again, a nurse is with your dog constantly, monitoring her level of anaesthesia and checking her vital signs. We check her respiration rate, gum colour and capillary refill time, temperature and presence or absence of certain reflexes. We also have monitoring equipment, such as Doppler to record blood pressure and a Pulse Oximeter to record heart rate and oxygen levels.

A large area on her tummy is clipped and the skin is cleaned with an antibacterial solution. Once she is carried into the operating theatre and put onto the heated table, a second surgical scrub is done, while the surgeon scrubs their hands. All nurses and vets in theatre wear hats and masks, and the operating vet wears sterile gloves and gown, and the dog is covered with sterile drapes.

The operation itself involves removing her whole uterus and both ovaries and tying off all the blood vessels to these organs. Then the surgical wound is closed up with dissolving stitches on the inside and nylon ones in the skin. The whole operation usually takes 30-45 minutes, depending on the size of the dog and how fat she is. (The fatter, the more difficult!)

Once her surgery is finished, the anaesthetic gas is turned off & she gets oxygen for a few more minutes, then she is taken through to the recovery room. She is kept warm and monitored closely until she is sitting up and can be left quietly to recover, with regular checks to chart her vital signs. While one nurse is doing this, another is cleaning the instruments to get them ready for sterilization in the autoclave.



A few hours later she is taken out to the toilet and given an anti-inflammatory for additional pain relief, and by late afternoon she is ready to go home!



Placing an intravenous catheter



The endotracheal tube goes in



Monica charts her vital signs while Didier operates



Ready to go back to recovery



Waking up!