

Recovery Area and Release Information for M*A*S*H Volunteers

Recovery should take place away from drafts and in a room temperature area.

Monitoring following surgery is vital until the pet is able to lift its head (becomes sternal). Breathing, heart rate, temperature and color (pink) let you know how the animal is doing.

Breathing: An unconscious animal is placed on its' side onto a recovery area (either onto a blanket or into its cage). Gently pull the tongue forward to ensure that the airway is open (unless the animal pulls back on its tongue). If the animal is unconscious, be sure the airway is open each time she/he is moved or turned.

Cats should be able to reasonably stretch out and should not recover in a carrier that is too small. Monitor breathing until sternal. Being periodically flipped from one side to the other aids recovery.

A dog or cat should take a breath at least every ten seconds.

Do not overload the cages of recovering animals with towels and blankets; they can suffocate.

Heart rate: The normal dog heart rate is 60 to 160 beats per minute. The normal feline heart rate is from 140 to 220 beats per minute; the main thing is that it is a steady thud. Use the stethoscope or learn to read pulse on the animals' chest to determine if the heart rate of a pet is steady, rapid, or uneven. **AT LEAST ONE PERSON IN RECOVERY SHOULD BE ABLE TO DETERMINE THE HEARTRATE.**

Temperature: Feel the ears and paws of an animal to see if the body temperature is lowered. They should not feel significantly chillier than the animal itself. Use a thermometer to check if unsure.

A dog's normal temperature is from 100.5 to 102.5 and a cats' temperature is from 100 to 102.5.

A mild heat source (such as an electric blanket on a low setting) under a plastic table cloth or tarp creates a comfortable recovery surface that can be wiped clean.

Cats or aggressive dogs in recovery may be placed INSIDE a carrier that is placed on top of the heated blanket, keeping the animals warm while preventing escape or a bite.

Color: A dog or cat's gums should look pink and moist. Pale or sticky gums may indicate blood loss or shock and should be treated as an emergency.

Karo syrup (0.25 cc) may be given to kittens under 16 weeks or cats that are thin once they're awake.

Abnormal recovery: the following must be immediately brought to the attention of the veterinarian.

- Breathing that is rapid, shallow or breaths occurring more than 10 seconds apart
- Non-ambulatory within normal amount of time (may have reaction to drugs)
- Not stirring when touched or a lack of, or poor, reflex at corner of eye (palpebral reflex) after 20 minutes, or a decline in reflexes after returning to cage.
- Bleeding (not seepage) from incision (females that were in season at the time of surgery may continue to show vaginal spotting or bleeding).
- Pale gums or sticky gums

Release and

Caution Release (*releasing an animal that had problems during surgery or recovery*)

Release:

Written aftercare instructions with an emergency phone number are a must/ They should be reviewed with each pet owner verbally.

'Ready to leave' means cats are sternal and dogs are able to stand and preferably walk.

Owners or caregivers must understand:

The animal may not be left outside in extreme temperature (heat or cold) for the next 24 hours.

Kittens or puppies under 16 weeks should eat a small amount as soon as they get home. Their regular food is good. If they won't eat, a small amount of Karo or other syrup should be given.

Cats that are not awake, or cats of mixed sizes, should not be put into a small carrier together.

Caution release includes any animal that has had problems in recovery or excessive bleeding during surgery. This also includes pets that have vomited or non-ambulatory dogs.

Caution release procedures:

A veterinarian should be notified before release of an animal that has had recovery problems.

When an animal is released with special instructions for care by the owner (such as an animal that is excessively groggy) the owner should be given a designated time to call back, even if the animal is fine.

"Please call us in two hours even if he/she is up, and please call sooner if she seems to be getting groggy," can prevent caregivers from waiting until an emergency occurs.