

## Recovery Area Information for M\*A\*S\*H Volunteers, a downloadable file to print

The recovery area should be 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.

**Maintain body heat by using blankets, thermal blankets, protection from a concrete floor using corrugated cardboard and if need be, use a hair drier on a warm setting.**

**Make sure all animals are labeled.**

**Breathing:** An unconscious animal is placed on its' side onto a recovery area. Gently pull the tongue forward to ensure that the airway is open. Secure the airway each time she/he is moved or turned.

Cats should be able to stretch out and should not recover in a carrier that is too small. Being periodically flipped from one side to the other can aid recovery.

A dog or cat should take a breath at least every ten seconds. If questions ask the veterinary team.

Do not load 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 heart beat should be a steady thud.

Use the stethoscope or read pulse on the animals' chest to determine if the heart 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 cooler than the body of the animal itself. Use a thermometer to check if unsure.

A dog's normal temperature is from 100.5 to 102.5

A cats' normal 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.

Aggressive pets in recovery may be placed INSIDE a carrier placed on top of the heated blanket, keeping the animals warm while preventing escape or a bite. Aggressive pets require the same care as others!

**Color:** Gums should appear pink and moist. Pale, grayish, bluish, bright red or sticky gums should be **treated as an emergency.**

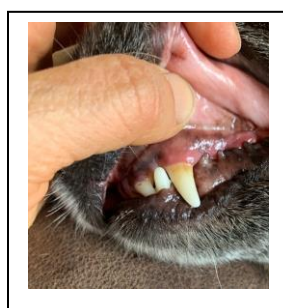
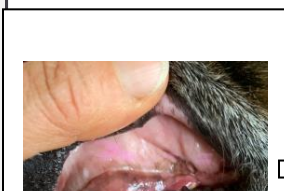
**Check CRT** (capillary refill time) by pressing on the gums to create a "white spot", let go; the color should return almost immediately. If color takes over two seconds to return, notify staff immediately.

Lift upper lip

Press firmly on gum

Lift finger

Color should return under 2 seconds



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Karo syrup (0.25 cc) should be given to pets under 16 weeks or ones that are thin once they're awake.

**The following must be immediately brought to the attention of the veterinarian.**

- Breathing that is rapid, shallow or breaths that are 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**

**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 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 (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 groggier," can prevent caregivers from waiting until an emergency occurs. Recovery issues should be in patient notes.