



Client Instructions - General Anaesthesia

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Before surgery:

- If your horse is insured and the surgery is planned, you should inform the insurance company that we intend to perform a surgery and, where appropriate, check that the insurers are prepared to cover the costs of this. This should be done in advance of the surgery date.
- All horses undergoing surgery MUST be up-to-date with their tetanus vaccines. Please check your horse's passport prior to your horse's surgery and let us know if your horse is overdue a tetanus vaccine.
- We generally remove the horse's shoes prior to surgery. If possible, this can be done prior to bringing the horse in.
- For most surgeries, horses can receive a light meal the afternoon before, but food is withheld overnight and the morning of the procedure. Please ask your vet if you are uncertain whether you should withhold food.
- Please bring your horse's passport when they are admitted. Please also bring any rugs you want your horse to wear if your horse stays overnight. Hay and feed are provided but if your horse has specific dietary requirements, please bring these feed types.
- The risks of the specific surgery that your horse is undergoing will be discussed with you prior to the procedure.

Surgical procedure:

- An intravenous catheter will be placed prior to surgery in most horses. This generally involves clipping a small area on the neck. Please let us know if you do not consent to clipping the neck.
- General anaesthesia (making horses fully unconscious by use of anaesthetic drugs) involves a number of risks which we will discuss with you at the hospital and please do ask if you have any additional questions. The risks vs. benefits associated with each surgical procedure are carefully considered on an individual basis for each patient and surgery is only recommended if necessary and appropriate. Surgical procedures are performed under general anaesthesia if they cannot be performed in a safe, careful and efficient manner under standing sedation. General anaesthesia is administered by trained veterinary surgeons, using the best drugs and with constant monitoring of vital parameters to minimise the risks to your horse. However, despite these precautions, you should be aware that very sick patients are at higher risk of suffering from anaesthetic complications. The mortality rate for general anaesthesia is very low in general, but it is higher than in other species (e.g. humans, dogs, cats).

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Surgical procedure continued:

- Recovery from anaesthesia is the most risky aspect of any general anaesthesia and can take a number of hours, depending on the animal and on the length of the procedure.
- Owners are not allowed to watch the surgical procedure or see their horse while under general anaesthesia, nor in recovery.

After surgery:

- Most horses undergoing surgery will be hospitalised at least overnight for monitoring, to ensure that they recover well from the surgery. In the scenario that they are discharged the same day, they can only be transported when fully recovered from the sedatives and food and sometimes water will be withheld until they are fully awake
- Anaesthetic drugs have a tendency to slow bowel movements down, which might increase the risk for colic. Watch your horse carefully for any signs of colic in the days following general anaesthesia and make sure that they are passing manure.

If you have any questions or concerns about your horse, please don't hesitate to contact us at the hospital.

Kind Regards,

The Endell Equine Team

