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Veterinary Anesthesia Application in Animals

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Opinion Article

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ABOUT THE STUDY

Veterinary anesthesia is anesthesia performed on non-human animals by a veterinarian or a Registered Veterinary Technician. Anesthesia is used for a wider range of circumstances in animals than in people, due to animals' inability to cooperate with certain diagnostic or therapeutic procedures. Veterinary anesthesia includes anesthesia of the major species: dogs, cats, horses, cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs, as well as all other animals requiring veterinary care such as birds, pocket pets, and wildlife.

Anesthesia which is supervised by a qualified technician is safer than anesthesia without a technician. In most private veterinary practices, the technician administers and monitors anesthesia with supervision from the attending veterinarian. In many academic institutions, anesthesia technicians are involved in working with and teaching veterinary students as well as supervising anesthetized cases. The Academy of Veterinary Technicians in Anesthesia and Analgesia is a provisional specialty academy of the North American Veterinary Technician Association and is responsible for licensing technicians as being specialized in anesthesia. For a technician to become specialized, they must be a licensed technician in their state, accumulate 6000 hours of work in veterinary medicine (at least 75% of which must be in anesthesia), 40 hours of continuing education related to anesthesia, demonstrate proficiency in anesthesia skills, and pass a comprehensive written examination.

Anesthesia is required for many surgical procedures which require the patient to be immobile, unaware, and without pain. Furthermore, anesthesia aims to minimize the surgical stress response. In addition, certain diagnostic procedures require anesthesia, notably stomach or airway endoscopy, bone marrow sampling, and occasionally ultrasound. Aggressive animals may require anesthesia in order to handle and perform a physical exam or obtain blood for testing. Exotic animals frequently require anesthesia for simple procedures (such as taking a radiograph

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or catheter placement) due to lack of domesticity. Animals may require anesthesia for therapeutic procedures, such as urinary catheterization to relieve obstruction, injection into a mass, or removing fluid from the eye to treat glaucoma.

In addition to anesthesia, analgesia is often managed by anesthesiologists or is included in the considerations for anesthesia. Cats and dogs are frequently anesthetized for surgical procedures. Small animals are most often placed under general anesthesia due to the types of procedures typically performed, the small size of the patient, their suitability to general anesthesia, and the greater degree of control. A balanced anesthesia protocol can be used whereby different drugs with different effects are used so that a high dose of just one drug can be avoided. For example, combining a sedative and an opioid will permit less inhalant anesthesia to be used, improving cardiovascular stability. A one-year study in a teaching hospital shows that dogs and cats typically experience a 1 in 9 chance of anesthetic complications, with a 1 in 233 risk of death. A larger-scale study states the risk of death in healthy dogs and cats as 1 in 1849 and 1 in 895 respectively. For sick dogs and cats, it was 1 in 75 and 1 in 71 respectively. For rabbits, the risk was 1 in 137 and 1 in 14 respectively for the healthy and sick groups.