



VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS BOARD
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Anaesthesia Policy

The ACT Veterinary Practitioners Board requires that every practice have established protocols for the administration and supervision of anaesthetic agents and that all clinical staff need to be aware of the procedures contained therein.

The procedures should:

- be set out in a readily accessible form;
- be used at any time of the day;
- show the drugs used, their dosage and routes of administration;
- be reviewed and updated regularly; and
- contain a copy of a suitable anaesthetic monitoring chart that is used in hospital.

A minimum data base needs to be established for every case undergoing anaesthesia. This includes a full clinical examination and recording of owner and patient name, breed, age, sex, heart rate, temperature. The date, procedure, time of procedure, drug doses and time and route of administration, surgeon and anaesthetist should be recorded.

The anaesthetic risk for the patient must be assessed, recorded and graded. A suitable system is the ASA (American Society of Anaesthesiologists) system where animals are graded from 1-5. Young animals would be graded 1-2, geriatric or sick animals graded 4-5. Those healthy animals with breed related anaesthetic problems would be grade 3 (eg brachycephalics). Except in an emergency, animals with a high anaesthetic risk (i.e. graded 4-5) should have additional laboratory investigation prior to anaesthesia. The minimum should include: urine specific gravity, packed cell volume and total blood protein. (If an owner refuses to agree to laboratory tests this should be noted).

A suitable oxygen delivery system should be used with monitoring by a competent and trained second person for all animals undergoing anaesthesia except for the following:

- Small animals where duration of procedure is 15 minutes or less;
- Large animals where duration of procedure is 60 minutes or less; and
- Emergencies.

An anaesthetic machine must be used for procedures taking more than 15 minutes for small animals and 60 minutes for large animals. The vaporiser should be calibrated regularly.

Animals should be continuously monitored. The recording of heart and respiratory rate should be monitored every 10-15 minutes. Departures from normal need to be recorded.

Due attention needs to be given to pain relief, intra and post anaesthetic body temperature. An animal graded 4-5 may need fluid therapy. Horses undergoing other than short procedures should have fluid therapy.

A record of anaesthetic deaths needs to be kept showing post mortem results and if a post mortem is not performed a reason should be given.

Evidence of compliance with these recommendations will constitute a complete anaesthetic record.

Practices should comply with occupational health and safety procedures or requirements, such as having an anaesthetic gas scavenging system in place where necessary.

The above procedures may be varied where individual situations indicate an alternative practice/method/treatment is justified.