

# 5 common myths about veterinary anesthesia

Scheduling surgery or dental work for your pet can be a scary proposition. Every procedure carries some measure of risk, so it's tough to think about your loved ones under anesthesia. But before you panic, talk to your veterinarian to determine what's best for your pet and discuss your concerns. And don't hesitate to do a little research of your own—here's a guide to some of the most common myths about anesthesia:

### **Myth: Anesthesia complications are common**

**Fact:** Don't let horror stories prevent your pet from receiving necessary veterinary care. Complications do occur, but deaths are rare. Studies suggest that for normal, healthy dogs and cats, the risk of death is approximately one in 2,000. For animals with a preexisting disease, that number increases to about one in 500. But a well-trained veterinary team will take every reasonable precaution—including having a knowledgeable staff, appropriate patient monitoring procedures, and proper patient evaluation and preparation—to minimize these risks.

### **Myth: Certain anesthetic drugs could harm my pet**

**Fact:** In most cases, monitoring a pet's condition (for example, monitoring anesthetic depth, blood oxygenation, respiration, blood pressure, body temperature, and heart electrical activity) during a procedure is much more important than which drug protocol is selected. It's more important for your veterinarian to tailor a protocol to each patient's needs and provide an appropriate level of supportive care—seldom is one drug better or worse than others since they all have benefits and risks.

### **Myth: Most complications occur during a procedure while my pet is asleep**

**Fact:** Almost half of anesthetic deaths occur after the delivery of anesthetic drugs during recovery. Ask your veterinarian for a run-down of how your pet will be cared for after a procedure and make sure you're comfortable with that level of care. Premium care will often cost a little more, but you can take comfort in the fact that your pet will be receiving an optimum level of attention and monitoring during a very critical period.

### **Myth: Most veterinarians provide a similar level of anesthetic care and monitoring**

**Fact:** Every veterinarian has a different way of doing things. Some may refer cases to or consult with a specialist for anesthetic procedures, while others may rely on their in-house team. If you have any questions or concerns, ask your veterinarian for details before your pet undergoes any anesthetic procedures, then make an informed decision about what's best for your pet.

### **Myth: The Internet is the most reliable source for information about potential anesthesia risks**

**Fact:** While some sites offer reliable and useful information, plenty of others contain inconsistencies or flat-out falsities. So don't be fooled by misinformation, which can spread quickly from website to website. Do your research on anesthesia and its potential—but rare—complications, then discuss your findings with your veterinarian to make sure you're getting the most accurate picture. This will allow you to do what's best for your pet—and perhaps rid your mind of a few unfounded fears.

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## A well-trained veterinary team will take every reasonable precaution to minimize the risks from anesthesia.

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