

RISKS OF GENERAL ANAESTHESIA

General anaesthesia is a controlled, reversible, sedation of the central nervous system producing unconsciousness, amnesia, pain relief and muscle relaxation.

Associated with any anaesthesia is a risk of unwanted complications, which very rarely may be fatal. The main risks are:

- Depression and/or reduced appetite for 1-2 days after anaesthesia
- Hypotension (low blood pressure)
- Skin reactions to anaesthetic drugs at the site of injection
- Tracheal (windpipe) irritation from the endotracheal tube inserted
- Vomiting and aspiration pneumonia, especially if the patient has not been starved prior to anaesthesia
- Anaphylactic (allergic) reaction to the anaesthetic drugs used
- Cardio-pulmonary depression or arrest
- Sudden death

Despite these possible complications, the chances of an anaesthetic problem are low and in almost all cases the benefits outweigh the risks.

We do our best to minimise these risks by evaluating each patient prior to anaesthesia, having modern and safe anaesthetic equipment and using the appropriate anaesthetic drugs. In elderly or debilitated patients we use very short acting human anaesthetic drugs and intravenous fluids to further minimise the risks.

If you have further concerns about the risks of anaesthesia in your animal, please feel free to discuss these with the veterinary nurse at admission.