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Questions to Ask When Comparing Surgical and Dental Services for Your Pet

At South Arundel, our primary concern is for the well-being of your pet. If you should decide to inquire about having a dental/surgical/anesthetic procedure performed at another clinic for financial reasons, be sure to ask the following questions about their policies and procedures so that you can make an accurate, informed comparison!

1. Do you do any pre-anesthetic testing?

All pets undergoing anesthesia need appropriate evaluation before surgery to assure that the liver and kidneys can metabolize the anesthetic and that no problems exist which are not readily apparent upon physical examination. Even apparently healthy animals can have organ system problems that cannot be detected without blood testing. It is important to identify these problems so that the amount and type of anesthetic can be altered accordingly or so that anesthesia can be avoided if the problem is a severe one. If a serious problem is detected, surgery can be postponed. Pets over seven years of age also have an EKG performed at South Arundel to check for abnormal heart rhythms or changes in heart size. A urinalysis is also performed to check for diabetes, early kidney disease or infection.

2. Who is monitoring the patient under anesthesia?

At least TWO people should be present while your pet is under anesthesia - one to perform the procedure and the other to monitor the pet's progress under anesthesia. At South Arundel a doctor *and* a veterinary technician are present at all times during every anesthetic procedure. During a dental cleaning, the doctor is monitoring anesthesia while the technician performs the cleaning. If any oral surgery (or other type of surgery) is being performed, the technician monitors your pet while the doctor performs surgery. During other surgeries, the trained veterinary technician monitors your pet while the doctor operates.

3. What type of monitoring do you do under anesthesia?

Continuous blood pressure monitoring is ESSENTIAL and the MOST IMPORTANT type of equipment-related monitoring, especially in smaller pets that tend to experience a drop in blood pressure under anesthesia. Other monitoring should include an EKG, pulse oximetry (measures degree of oxygenation of the blood), oxygen/carbon dioxide levels and body temperature.

4. What type of support does my pet receive under anesthesia?

At South Arundel an intravenous (IV) catheter is placed in all patients undergoing an anesthetic procedure. (with the exception of feline castration). Intravenous fluids are administered to help maintain blood pressure and the volume given can be adjusted as needed. An IV catheter is also ESSENTIAL should the need arise to give supportive medications - like atropine to increase heart rate - or any emergency drugs. Emergency drugs are rarely needed, but certainly no one wants their pet to be the one who did need them and did not have an IV catheter for administration! Thermal support, via a heating pad or a forced heated air "blanket" (called a Bair Hugger) is also essential in smaller pets.

5. For dental procedures, do you have a digital dental x-ray unit?

A digital dental x-ray unit means less time under anesthesia for your pet and a quicker and more accurate diagnosis. Dental x-rays are essential to identify sub-clinical tooth root abscesses and/or to determine the future viability of a tooth (whether or not the jaw bone is adequately attached to the tooth) before making the decision to extract the tooth.

6. What type of monitoring is done during recovery?

At South Arundel, a designated technician monitors your pet's vitals, alerting the doctor and taking any necessary action to assure a smooth, pain-free recovery.