

# American Association of Feline Practitioners releases new feline anesthesia guidelines

July 10 2018

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The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) today released the first feline-specific anesthesia guidelines to the veterinary community, which are published in the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*. General anesthesia is an essential component of feline practice, without which surgery and certain other treatment modalities and diagnostic procedures would be impossible. These feline-focused Guidelines are vital to cat health. Due to their unique physiology and small size, cats undergoing anesthesia are at a relatively greater risk of complications and mortality than many other species. Empirical evidence shows that cats undergoing anesthesia have a higher mortality rate compared with dogs.<sup>1,2</sup>

Relying on a standardized, evidence-based approach for administering anesthesia is especially useful for ensuring the patient's safe and predictable perioperative response and recovery. These Guidelines address specific causes of disparities and ways of avoiding perioperative complications associated with monitoring, airway management, fluid therapy, and recovery. Additionally, the Guidelines discuss other important aspects of feline anesthesia, including perianesthetic anxiety and stress, perianesthetic monitoring by physical and electronic means, the role of underlying diseases such as hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM), the correct use of anesthesia equipment, and total injectable anesthesia.

Content has been organized in the following areas: use and care of equipment, preanesthetic assessment, comorbidities, critical patient

emergencies, anesthesia and sedation, perioperative complications, and anesthesia recovery.

"The overarching purpose of the AAFP Anesthesia Guidelines is to make anesthesia and sedation safer for the feline patient. We are committed to improving the health and welfare of all cats and providing this resource to veterinary teams is an important milestone," said Heather O'Steen, CEO of the AAFP.

The Guidelines were authored by an expert panel and include visuals and other information designed to minimize risks associated with anesthesia; namely, tables, charts, and algorithms that are very useful resources for veterinary teams. These invaluable tips and techniques for the practice team start even before the patient leaves home and goes through the critical recovery period. The associated client brochure provides cat caregivers with digestible information that enables them to understand anesthesia, what to expect, properly prepare their cat for a procedure, and care for them during recovery ([catfriendly.com/anesthesia](http://catfriendly.com/anesthesia)).

"By proactively developing an individualized anesthetic plan that considers the uniqueness of each feline patient and recognizing that 'one size does not fit all,' the experience for the cat can be improved and the outcome successful. It is our hope that these Guidelines will become the practice's go-to resource and each team member will have a new awareness of all the tools and techniques available to them," in a joint statement, said Guidelines Co-Chairs Susan M. Gogolski, DVM, PMP, DABVP (Canine/Feline) and Sheilah A. Robertson, BVMS (Hons), Ph.D., DACVAA, DECVAA, DACAW, DECAWBM (WSEL), MRCVS.

It is recommended that these Guidelines—endorsed by the International Society of Feline Medicine (ISFM) - be used in conjunction with other previously published guidelines (freely accessible at

[catvets.com/guidelines](https://catvets.com/guidelines)), such as those on feline friendly handling, feline friendly nursing care, senior care, pain management, and fluid therapy, as they each contain specific information that should be considered when sedating and/or anesthetizing cats. The Anesthesia Guidelines and associated supplemental resources are available for download on the [AAFP website](https://aafp.org) so practice teams can easily retrieve, print, and laminate them for quick reference. They can also be attached to [anesthesia](#) machines and displayed on walls in the preparation, surgery, and recovery areas.

**More information:** To access the Guidelines, supplemental resources, and client brochure, visit: [catvets.com/anesthesia](https://catvets.com/anesthesia) .

To access the AAFP's consumer site with anesthesia information for cat owners, visit: [catfriendly.com/anesthesia](https://catfriendly.com/anesthesia) .

1 Dyson DH, Maxie MG and Schnurr D. Morbidity and mortality associated with anesthetic management in small animal veterinary practice in Ontario. *J Am Anim Hosp Assoc* 1998; 34: 325-335.

2 Brodbelt DC, Pfeiffer DU, Young LE, et al. Risk factors for anaesthetic-related death in cats: results from the confidential enquiry into perioperative small animal fatalities (CEPSAF). *Br J Anaesth* 2007; 99: 617-623.

Provided by SAGE Publications

Citation: American Association of Feline Practitioners releases new feline anesthesia guidelines (2018, July 10) retrieved 8 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-07-american-association-feline-practitioners-anesthesia.html>

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