

General Anaesthetics

(GA's) are used to keep horses asleep during surgical procedures. A variety of drugs and techniques can be used to induce anaesthesia, these drugs mean the horse is unaware of the procedure being performed and can feel no pain.

Preparing for a GA

Horses should be starved for 12 hours before a general anaesthetic is administered (water is allowed).

On the morning of an anaesthetic, a vet will perform a pre-anaesthetic check, which involves a detailed clinical exam, in order to ensure the horse is in good enough health to undergo the procedure.

A square of hair is then clipped over the jugular vein and an intravenous catheter placed, to allow easy administration of drugs. A sedative is given around 30 minutes prior to surgery to allow the horse to relax before the anaesthetic begins.

Horses are anaesthetised in a well padded box and the procedure performed.

Throughout the procedure as well as the surgeon, another vet will closely monitor the patient to ensure a stable anaesthetic.

On recovery from the anaesthetic, horses are left quietly to recover in a stable. At this point horses are very groggy and visits from owners are not recommended.

Aftercare

After a GA horses are required to stay at least overnight for monitoring, the length of the stay will vary depending on the procedure performed.

Specific aftercare instructions are discussed in relation to each case.

Risks associated with anaesthetics

As with any species, there are risks associated with all surgical procedures and anaesthetics. Obviously steps are taken to minimise these risks as much as possible, but it is important that owners are aware and understand these risks prior to giving consent to GA and surgery. These risks vary from very minor ailments post surgery to, exceptionally rarely, death.

Please discuss any particular worries, concerns or questions you have with a vet prior to surgery.