College of Veterinarians of British Columbia

Monitoring and Recording during the Anesthetic Recovery Period

One of the most common deficiencies seen by inspectors when inspecting a facility relates to small animal facilities and anesthetic records. A lack of any mention or detail of what occurs during the recovery period is commonly missing from the anesthetic monitoring sheet and/or the main part of the medical record.

The Professional Practice Standard on Small Animal Anesthetic Monitoring has this to say about monitoring during the recovery period:

> 5. Medical Record Keeping
>
> ...
>
> d) Record heart rate, respiratory rate, and temperature at intervals appropriate to the patient's status in the early recovery phase (15-60 minutes after extubation)

and

> 6. Recovery Period Monitoring in recovery must include evaluation of:
>
> a) pulse rate and quality,
> b) mucous membrane color,
> c) respiratory pattern,
> d) signs of pain, and
> e) temperature
>
> at a frequency determined by the status of the individual patient.

We understand that busy facilities are often "keeping an eye" on their patients after they are extubated, and some are doing more than that and checking a TPR. However, if there is nothing in the record, there is no proof that it occurred. The post extubation period can be one of the most dangerous times for complications, and having a system in place for your team to monitor and record these parameters will help alert you to a patient experiencing difficulties.

The appropriate length of time to monitor and record recovery will vary depending on the status of the patient, the procedure and what events may have occurred during the procedure. A young cat recovering from elective spay surgery will have a shorter recovery time than a senior cat recovering from a full mouth extraction. A young elective dog neuter will be running out of their kennel in the same amount of time the dog receiving opioids for its TPLO is still not lifting its head. In all those cases, appropriate assessment of pain relief is important to ensure we are offering appropriate care to our patients.

Many of the anesthetic monitoring sheet templates do not include an area to record recovery monitoring. It may be worth editing one to add a space for recovery monitoring, or create a separate form that can travel with the patient to allow for ongoing monitoring and recording of these values.

Although the Standard is written for small animal monitoring, these same principles can be applied to equine and large animal practitioners. Appropriate monitoring does not end when the procedure ends, and it is important to ensure the patient has recovered and is assessed for pain, **and** that is recorded in the medical record.

Professional Practice Standards are often developed to address an area in the Standards or Bylaws that require better detail and clarification. This often occurs due to trends seen in the Complaints process and recognition that Registrants need more guidance in an area. PFAC considers monitoring and recording during the Recovery period to be a high priority to resolve if this is noted as a deficiency during an inspection.