

Surgical Evaluation Criteria

HCAL's mission is to provide affordable spays and neuters to dogs and cats who are healthy enough to undergo surgery. The first and foremost consideration has been, is, and always will be the safety and well-being of the patient. This is bedrock to veterinary medicine and is non-negotiable.

When an animal appears to be in good health and no obvious problems are detected, surgery can be considered a reasonable risk. However, multiple factors, including age, general condition, hormonal status, possible comorbidities, weight and health issues must be considered, as these can adversely impact the animal and increase the risk of a negative surgical outcome. If health issues are found at the point of assessment, professional standards demand that you not proceed with an elective surgery until a diagnostic workup is done to determine the advisability of proceeding.

Below are some of the conditions that may require the cancelation of surgery, with a request to reschedule when the condition has improved. A medical evaluation by a full-service veterinarian may be required.

Cats:

Symptom	Complication or risk
Distended belly	Condition may be due to congestive heart failure, liver cirrhosis, or abdominal tumors.
Upper Respiratory Infection - nasal discharge, sneezing, cough	Could be caused by a number of highly contagious viruses. The animal's ability to breathe under anesthesia is compromised and the virus will unquestionably be transmitted through our anesthesia machines.
Obesity	Significantly higher anesthesia risk because gas anesthesia accumulates in fat cells and unpredictably influences anesthetic levels
Ringworm	Highly contagious fungal disease; public health risk, transmitting to humans and animals alike

Dogs:

Symptom	Complication or risk
Loose stool or diarrhea	May be early symptoms of parvo virus or distemper or could be the result of intestinal parasites.
Upper Respiratory Infection - nasal discharge, sneezing, cough	Could be caused by several highly contagious viruses such as distemper, canine influenza, or canine infectious bronchitis. The animal's ability to breathe under anesthesia is compromised and the virus will unquestionably be transmitted through our anesthesia machines.
Heartworm Positive	Heartworms live in the chambers of the heart and impact the blood flow and the heart's ability to function. Under anesthesia, heartworms have a greater tendency to break free of their attachment in the heart and travel through the bloodstream acting like a blood clot.
Tickborne Diseases	Profoundly affect blood clotting ability and also produce significant anemia
Mammary masses	Most often are the result of breast cancer; cancer should be evaluated prior to surgery.
Ringworm	Highly contagious fungal disease; public health risk, transmitting to humans and animals alike
In-heat/pregnant	Hormonal activity and increased blood flow to reproductive organs increases bleeding risk during surgery and recovery; tissue is more delicate and easily torn during surgery.
Obesity	Significantly higher anesthesia risk because gas anesthesia accumulates in fat cells and unpredictably influences anesthetic levels.
6+ years of age	Incidence of co-morbidities increases significantly with age.

HCAL has labored diligently over the last few years to reduce our post-surgical complications by carefully reviewing our anesthetic and surgical procedures and by purchasing better monitoring and surgical equipment. However, the single most valuable change we have made has been in increasing the rigor of case selection, carefully choosing which animals are fit for surgery.