

# Recovery Monitor

The Recovery Monitor observes the cats closely as they wake from anesthesia and alerts a veterinarian, if a cat exhibits any problems that need medical attention. **This position does not require a rabies vaccination.**

---

## Safety First

- ✓ **Most perioperative deaths occur during the first 3 hours after surgery.** Recovery is the most dangerous period for cats undergoing surgery.
- ✓ **Cats must be monitored continuously** during this very risky period.
- ✓ **Visually monitor the cats closely.** If the cat is moving, blinking or licking, then it is recovering normally. If the cat is fully sedated, watch the chest for movement. Breathing can be very shallow and difficult to see. A normal respiratory rate is 6 or more breaths per minute. If breathing is less frequent or isn't visible at all, alert the Vaccinations Technician to do a hands-on assessment immediately.
- ✓ Notify a veterinarian immediately, if a cat is in distress. Never remove a conscious cat from a trap. A cat should only be removed from a trap, if it is unconscious.

## Station Alert

- **Continually “walk the line” pacing back and forth along the rows of cats to provide constant monitoring.**

**KEEP THE TRAPS UNCOVERED UNTIL THE CATS ARE COMPLETELY AWAKE AND NO LONGER NEED CLOSE MONITORING!**

## Recovery Monitor Instructions

1. **Visually monitor the cats closely.** If the cat is moving, blinking or licking, then it is recovering normally. If the cat is fully sedated, watch the chest for movement. Breathing can be very shallow and difficult to see. A normal respiratory rate is 6 or more breaths per minute. If breathing is less frequent or isn't visible at all, alert a supervisor immediately.
2. **Check the position of the cats in the traps,** tilting the traps, if needed, to reposition the cats in order to extend the neck and breathe freely.
3. **Monitor the cats continuously** as they recover in the Recovery Station. Some cats may have more difficult recoveries than others.
  - Tipped ears may bleed a lot, especially when the cat is thrashing about hitting the ear on the cage and preventing clot formation. This bleeding will eventually stop on its own. Notify a supervisor, if there is active hemorrhage (i.e. uninterrupted blood flow) from the ear.
  - Respiration may be slow, if the cat is still under anesthetic influence.
  - Thrashing around is considered normal as long as the cat's limbs or body are not stiff or convulsing. Cover a thrashing cat's cage with its trap cover to calm it. Be sure you can still observe its recovery.
  - Vomiting and heaving are not considered normal. If you notice a cat retching or attempting to vomit, call a supervisor immediately.
4. **Advise a Medications Technician, if a cat is not waking up.** These cats will receive a supplemental dose of yohimbine (0.3 ml IM or IV) to further reverse the effects of anesthesia.
5. **The Recovery Station has two phases. One supervisor oversees each phase.**
  - **Phase 1:** Cats stay in the main area immediately after surgery for assessment and monitoring. They will be on their sides, ear tip up. Particular attention must be paid to breathing, bleeding from incision and ear tip, and temperature regulation. Supplemental heat is provided with heat lamps. Once a cat can 1) become and remain sternal, 2) hold its head up and 3) right itself if it falls over, then it can be transferred to Phase 2 Recovery in the hallway. **DO NOT COVER TRAPS IN PHASE 1 RECOVERY!**

- Phase 2: Cats are transported to the recovery area in the hallway for additional monitoring, once they become sternal. Particular attention must be paid to the cat's level of consciousness, especially if it becomes more sedate as time lapses. This can indicate hypothermia, internal bleeding or other emergent complications. Close attention to the incision is important as cats wake up and move around more. The back 1/3 of the trap may be covered to give the cat a place to hide while it recovers, but monitors must be very attentive to the hiding cats. Once the cat is coordinated, not thrashing or banging, is steadily sternal or standing and alert, then it may be transferred to the Discharge Station.
6. **Monitors should continually “walk the line”** checking on each and every cat in their phase of recovery. Make mental note of which cats aren't becoming progressively more awake as time passes.
  7. **Continue to monitor the cats**, checking their recovery until they are returned to the caregivers.
  8. **When cats are completely awake, the rear third of the trap should be covered with their trap cover** to reduce stress. **DO NOT COVER CATS UNTIL THEY ARE COMPLETELY RECOVERED AND NO LONGER NEED CLOSE MONITORING!** Traps in recovery should never be completely covered, as visual observation is required until discharge.
  9. **Monitors should not take breaks unless they have transferred their responsibilities to another monitor who can keep a close eye on all cats.** The cats should **never** be left unmonitored.

## Station Closing and Cleanup

When the clinic is concluded:

- inventory the remaining supplies and repack the supply kit
- return the kit, station instructions, and any remaining items to storage
- clean the area
- dispose of all trash
- wash all tables, including the central trough
- wipe down entire base of table
- remove tape from underside of table
- wipe as much of the overhead surgery lamp as can be reached
- sweep or vacuum
- mop the floor.