

# Veterinary Assistant

The Veterinary Assistant sets up the surgical tables making sure the Spay Surgeons can perform surgeries as efficiently as possible never having to wait for cats *or* supplies. **This position requires a rabies vaccination.**

---

## Safety First

- ✓ **Respiration should be >6/minute, heartbeat should be >100/minute, and gum color should be pink.** If the cat is not breathing well, or its gums are blue, take the cat immediately to the Emergency Station. Speaking loudly and calmly say “cat not breathing” to alert vets to converge at the Emergency Station.  
*Note: Xylazine causes pale gums.*
- ✓ **Dispose of all needles and syringes according to protocol with no exceptions. Do not recap the needles.** Place the needle/syringe combination into a sharps disposal container. The needle cap can be disposed of in garbage or the sharps container.

## Station Alert

**Veterinary Assistants are assigned to work with up to 5 surgeons.** Each surgeon works differently, so it’s important to ask each one how to best assist them. Surgeons should be performing surgery at all times and should never have to transport cats or obtain supplies for themselves. Remain with your surgeon(s) and provide any supplies or other items they request.

- **Veterinary Assistants must wear gloves at all times and must wear surgical caps and masks** when in the surgery area. Maintain an ample supply of caps and masks in the baskets attached to the cat rack at the entry to the surgery area.
- **Only Surgery Transporters, Surgeons and Veterinary Assistants are permitted in the surgical area.**
- **Do not remove any alert tags.**

## Veterinary Assistant Instructions

1. **Monitor the cats frequently throughout the time in surgery.**
2. **Supply the spay table** with spay packs, appropriately sized sterile surgeon’s gloves, blade, suture packs and Super Glue<sup>®</sup> on the Mayo stand near the wall. The surgeons need a new pair of sterile gloves, a new spay pack, new blades, and new suture for each surgery. Do not open more than one spay pack at a time.
3. **Prep the spay table with gloves, spay pack, blades and sutures.**
  - Open the gloves and a spay pack using sterile procedures being careful not to damage the outer wrapper of the pack so that it can be reused. Place the open spay pack at the end of the table opposite the cat’s head.
  - Open the blade and suture packs so that the sterile contents remain in the open sterile pack.
  - Do not touch or otherwise contaminate the surgical site or the surgical supplies, instruments and drapes. If you think you may have touched something, tell the surgeon.
4. **Accept transfer of a cat from the [Surgery Transporter](#).** Position the spay board in the center of the table with the head facing the center aisle so that there is room on both ends; at the head for the Medical Record and at the tail for the spay pack.
5. **Compare the Paw Tag and the Medical Record to be sure the ID# matches.**
6. **Obtain the isoflurane gas machine, if the cat is not fully anesthetized.** Ask the surgeon for the proper settings, and always turn on the oxygen before the gas. Cats recover more quickly from gas than from a second anesthetic injection.
7. **Check the Medical Record, any “Medical Alert” tags and the Veterinary Examination Form** for any additional instructions before the cat is draped. Alert the surgeon to any problems or medical conditions that need attention.
8. **Adjust the light,** so the incision area is illuminated from the side opposite the surgeon before the surgeon cuts the drape.

9. **Return the cat to the [Surgery Prep Station](#)**, if the surgical area needs attention such as additional shaving.
10. **If the surgeon discovers a condition that requires antibiotics, such as pyometra, and the cat has not received Baytril® and Convenia® pre-operatively**, the surgeon will order doses of these antibiotics. Dose charts are available on the center surgery supply table. Baytril® is available in the crash cart and Convenia® is available at the Veterinary Examination Station. Administer the antibiotics promptly after the surgeon's request. Record the injections on the Medical Record.
11. **After the surgery is finished, neatly complete the applicable portions of the Surgical Record section** on the Medical Record.
  - Record the name of surgeon and indicate their status: Veterinarian (DVM) or veterinary student.
  - Complete the Anesthesia section.
  - Complete the Surgery Report section in detail.
  - Ask the surgeon whether there are any special surgical or medical notes to record on the Medical Record. All unusual findings or treatment must be documented, including a documented response to all medical alert tags.
12. **Ask the surgeon whether fluids are indicated**, if the Veterinary Examination Station did not previously order them. Write the volume of fluids ordered by the surgeon on the Medical Record. Attach a yellow "Fluids" tag to the left front paw with a rubber band.
13. **Ask the surgeon whether TO GO HOME ORDERS are indicated**. Select from the bottom of the Veterinary Examination Form, circle any that need to be sent home with the cat, and check the corresponding box at the bottom of the Medical Record.
14. **Ask the surgeon whether any notes to the caregiver are indicated** to explain any abnormal findings. If so, summarize significant findings and home instructions in language suitable for cat caregivers to understand and comply with in the notes box in the lower part of the Surgical Record.
15. **Ask the surgeon to initial the Medical Record to verify it is complete.**
16. **If the cat has been identified as infectious/URI**, was not separated and is being processed amidst non-infectious cats, then the vaccines and medications should be administered at the surgery table.
  - While the surgeon monitors the cat on the surgery table, take the cat's Medical Record and retrieve the Rabies Certificate, vaccines and proper doses of buprenorphine, yohimbine and Advantage Multi®.
  - Return to surgery to administer the vaccines and medications. Note URI on the Medical Record.
  - On the Rabies Certificate, complete the cat identification number at the top, write in the rabies vaccine serial number in the appropriate place, mark the rabies as 1 year and the FVRCP-FeLV as "initial dose." The Clinic Records Station will complete the rest of the certificate.
  - After medications and vaccines have been administered and all records are complete, return the paperwork to the plastic sleeve and ask the Surgery Transporter to take the cat directly to the Clinic Records Station.
17. **Dispose of the used syringes and needles in sharps container. Do not recap or reuse.**
18. **If requested by the Neuter Surgeon, retrieve vaccines and medications for infectious/URI cats at the Neuter Station** using the same protocol as for the spay surgeons.
19. **Clean the incision area of all blood before the cat leaves the station.** Use hydrogen peroxide and the blue surgical towel to clean the surgical area. **Do not allow the hydrogen peroxide to contact the incision.**
20. Call the Surgery Transporter to transfer the cat to the [Vaccinations Station](#) and return with a new cat for surgery.
21. **Maintain the surgical area throughout the clinic.** Take care to keep the area clean and free of medical waste, used instruments, dirty towels and other disposables.
  - Place used surgical instruments into warm soapy water. **The Surgery Transporter will transport the used instruments and surgical laundry** to the surgery area entry line (demarcated by tape on the floor) so that Instrument Station volunteers can collect them without entering the surgical area. Instrument Station volunteers should not enter the surgery area.

- Discard the paper drape, used gauze, gloves and other disposables, saving the outer autoclave wrap for reuse. Set aside dirty towels for laundering.
- Deliver any uncollected used instruments, dirty towels and autoclave wrap to the Instruments Station when the clinic is concluded.
- Defective instruments should be identified by tape and delivered to the Clinic Supervisor to assess for repair or disposal.

### **Station Closing and Cleanup**

Student surgeons should break down and clean up their own spay stations.

The Veterinary Assistant will break down and clean up the stations of DVM surgeons.

When surgery 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
- break down the anesthesia machines and tubing
- clean breathing circuits, masks, tubes, bags and endotracheal tubes in Accel, then rinse and hang to dry
- sweep or vacuum
- mop the floor.