

KETAMINE INFORMATION

Anesthetic Deaths in Cats

Reference Source: <http://www.vetinfo4cats.com/canesthesia.html#Anesthetic%20death%20in%20cat>
This "answer", by Dr. Richards, was given after he was asked about Ketamine related deaths during a routine dental cleaning procedure.

By: Mike Richards, DVM

"Ketamine causes hypertension during anesthetic recovery and it is possible that the detrimental effects attributed to ketamine may be due primarily to cases of undiagnosed cardiomyopathy in cats undergoing anesthetic procedures. These cats would be especially sensitive to hypertension and the increase in blood pressure induced by ketamine is supposed to be pretty significant **in some cats**. [Exotics: Devons, Sphynx, Selkirks, Orientals]

In a study published in the Journal of the American Animal Hospital Association by Dyson, et.al in the July/August 1998 issue veterinarians in the study group kept track of anesthetic procedures for six months and the medications used. The overall risk of death from anesthesia was reported to be 0.1 percent (1 in 1000).

There is an increase in risk in cats when diazepam was used and when cats are intubated. It is likely that your cat was intubated for a teeth cleaning procedure, as well. Whether these risks will be the same in future similar studies is hard to say, since I could only find this one study with well documented information on anesthetic risk.

I have had some bad experiences with diazepam in cats. I have not had these experiences using it as an anesthetic agent, though. The reaction to diazepam most commonly reported in cats is liver damage, which usually shows up after using diazepam orally for a week or so. This is the reaction that we have experienced. We withdraw diazepam at the first sign of problems but even doing this we have had one cat come very, very, close to death when using this medication. We have not had a problem with single injections of diazepam and this has not been reported to be a problem, as oral diazepam has.

It is really hard to accept an anesthetic death for a routine procedure. This is not a pain that goes away quickly. Please remember that it is important to take care of dental problems and other disorders that place patients at risk of anesthetic complications. Overall, there are many more pets served well by the availability of anesthesia than patients who are harmed by it. That doesn't make it easier when your pet is the one who dies, though. It just helps to remember that you made the decision to proceed with anesthesia for good reasons.

For a long time I have heard reports of episodes of pulmonary edema and/or heart failure following anesthesia in cats. **There has been some concern among veterinarians over the potential for ketamine, a commonly used anesthetic agent, to cause episodes of pulmonary edema.** No one seems to be certain why this occurs, nor how frequently. We use ketamine in our practice and have not had an anesthetic death in several years. **Ketamine appears to cause hypertension during the recovery period in many cats. If the cat has pre-existing cardiomyopathy this could lead to a sudden worsening of the cardiomyopathy leading to pulmonary edema and death, if the cardiomyopathy can not be brought under control with medications.** There is some possibility that this effect could occur even without cardiomyopathy being present. I have only seen reports of this condition in association with Ketamine."