PRE-PROCEDURE INFORMATION

Preparing for an Ultrasound

> This page explains what to expect for your pet's upcoming ultrasound, including fasting requirements, sedation, the possibility of a fine needle aspirate (FNA) if something is found that needs further evaluation, and what to expect at drop-off and pick-up. If your pet is also having an X-ray, please see our X-ray information page as well.

What an Ultrasound Involves

An ultrasound is a non-invasive imaging technique that allows us to examine your pet's internal organs in real time. While the ultrasound itself is painless, most pets require sedation to stay still enough for clear imaging. Your pet's belly (or chest, for a cardiac ultrasound) will likely be shaved to improve image quality.

An ultrasound study typically takes 30–45 minutes depending on what's being examined. For abdominal ultrasounds, fasting and timing around urination both matter for getting a clear, useful result — details below.

Fasting and Preparation

⚠ **Abdominal ultrasounds:** please do not feed your pet for 12 hours before the appointment. Food in the stomach or intestines can make the study non-diagnostic, and there is a $247 same-day cancellation fee if the study can't be completed as a result. Water is allowed at any time.

- If your pet is coming in for a urinary issue, or the bladder needs to be assessed, please try to prevent urination within 2 hours of the appointment.
- Cardiac ultrasounds do not require fasting.

Fine Needle Aspirate (FNA)

During your pet's ultrasound, we may identify an area — such as a lymph node, organ, or mass — that would benefit from further evaluation. In some cases, we recommend an ultrasound-guided fine needle aspirate (FNA) during the same visit: a minimally invasive procedure using a small needle, guided by ultrasound imaging, to collect a sample of cells for a pathologist to examine.

Why might we recommend an FNA?

- To help determine whether a mass or organ change is inflammatory, infectious, or cancerous
- To get more information without needing to do surgery
- To make faster, more accurate treatment decisions

Is it safe?

Yes — FNAs are generally safe and well tolerated. Since your pet will already be sedated for the ultrasound, they're kept comfortable throughout. Mild bleeding or discomfort at the site is possible but usually resolves on its own. In rare cases, more significant bleeding can occur, especially if a pet has an undiagnosed clotting issue (such as low platelets). We take precautions to minimize this risk, and complications are very uncommon.

What does it cost?

- Ultrasound-guided FNA: approximately $150 (includes up to 3 sites)
- Cytology (if the sample is sent for pathologist review): typically $155–$250, depending on how many sites are sampled
- FNAs to collect urine from the bladder (cystocentesis) are complimentary

We'll always discuss any fees with you if something unexpected is recommended.

ℹ We'll only perform an FNA if we see something on ultrasound that warrants it. If you give consent ahead of time, we can often do the procedure during the same visit, avoiding delays and a second appointment. If you'd prefer to wait and discuss findings first, that's completely okay too.

Before You Arrive

- Please answer some questions about your pet's current health when asked at check-in, or ahead of time using our history questionnaire — this helps streamline your visit when you arrive.
- Short-notice cancellations and no-shows may be charged a fee — please call us as soon as possible if you can't make your appointment.
- If you haven't already, please confirm your appointment by emailing hello@royalbayvet.ca.

What to Expect on the Day

1. **Check-in**
   Our team will confirm fasting status and any last details before the study.
2. **Health history questions**
   We'll ask a series of questions about your pet's health history if this hasn't already been covered — please allow some time for this.
3. **Signing the consent form**
   We'll need you to sign a consent form authorizing sedation (and FNA, if applicable) for your pet. You can do this at check-in, or fill it out in advance to help streamline things.
4. **Sedation and shaving**
   Your pet is sedated, and the belly or chest is shaved to improve image quality.
5. **Ultrasound study**
   The exam itself typically takes 30–45 minutes. If something is found that warrants it, and we have your consent, an FNA may be performed during the same visit.
6. **Recovery**
   Your pet is monitored as sedation wears off. We'll call you to arrange pick-up.

When Will My Pet Be Ready for Pick-Up?

This is a harder question to answer than you might think. We typically arrange several ultrasounds in a row, and the order depends on a number of factors decided once all pets have arrived:

- An emergency patient may need to go first
- A particularly reactive pet may need to be sedated immediately upon arrival
- Ultrasounds sometimes are coordinated with surgical procedures, which can make timing with the surgeon tricky
- There's individual variation too — some pets wake up quickly from sedation, others take hours

For these reasons, pick-up time is sometimes hours after drop-off. We ask for your trust and patience as we make the best decisions we can — we'll call you as soon as your pet is ready.

Going Home

Your pet may seem groggy or a little unsteady on their feet for a few hours after the sedation — this is normal. Keep them somewhere warm, quiet, and supervised until they're walking normally. Offer water and a small amount of food once they seem interested.

⚠ Contact us if your pet seems excessively difficult to rouse, has trouble breathing, or you're otherwise concerned once home.

When Will I Find Out the Results?

Turnaround time for ultrasound reports is usually around 2–7 days.

If we notice anything urgent, we'll do our best to reach out sooner.

Concerned About Cost?

We never want cost to stand in the way of your pet getting the care they need. If you'd like to explore pet insurance or payment plan options, see our financing options page.

Add a Photo to Your Pet's Profile

Feel free to email us your favourite photo of your pet at hello@royalbayvet.ca so we can add it to their patient profile!

Questions Before Your Appointment?

If anything about your appointment isn't clear, or your pet's situation has changed since booking, please reach out before your visit.

ROYAL BAY VETERINARY CLINIC

During clinic hours

250-940-4646

hello@royalbayvet.ca

AFTER-HOURS EMERGENCIES

Central Victoria Veterinary Hospital

250-475-2495

760 Roderick St

WAVES Emergency

778-432-4322

947 Langford Parkway