



# San Francisco Veterinary Specialists

## CT Scans & Your Pet: A Primer for SFVS Clients

At San Francisco Veterinary Specialists, our team has access to state-of-the-art medical diagnostic equipment, including a computed tomography (CT or “CAT”) scanner. CT scans provide a safe, precise and quick method for diagnosing your pet’s illness or injury and for identifying treatment or surgery options. Some frequently asked questions from pet owners about CT scans are discussed below.

### Why does my pet need a CT scan?

As in human medical care, CT scans are recommended in veterinary practice to diagnose and determine treatment for a variety of health issues. Among other things, CT scans are useful for identifying cancerous and non-cancerous masses; pneumonia, nasal disease and other respiratory system problems; urinary problems; and broken bones and dislocated elbows and hips. They are helpful for locating foreign bodies in soft tissue and are able to produce precise images of the heart and blood vessels. CT scans are often recommended for pets experiencing unexplained seizures, behavioral changes, mobility problems, and chronic nasal or ear discharge.

A CT scan provides a sharper picture of what is going on inside your pet. Unlike traditional X-rays, CT scans allow veterinarians to look within an organ instead of merely seeing an outline. CT scans also identify the precise size and location of an abnormality.

### What happens during a CT scan? Will my pet have to receive anesthesia?

A CT scan is a non-invasive procedure that uses X-ray technology and computer processing to produce cross-sectional images of your pet. These image “slices” are both horizontal and vertical, providing an unobstructed 3-D view of the area in question.

Because it is essential that your pet remain motionless during the procedure, general anesthesia is used. Any movement can compromise the quality of the image. Once your pet is asleep, he or she will be placed on the bed of the CT scanner in an appropriate position. The scan is quick and painless. After the necessary images are obtained, your pet will be monitored closely as the effects of the anesthesia subside. A CT scan will expose your pet to a small dose of radiation, but the benefits of the procedure generally far outweigh the risks.

### Is there anything I should do to prepare my pet for a CT scan?

The use of anesthesia requires that you fast your pet in preparation for the procedure, meaning no food or water after 10 p.m. on the evening before the procedure. Your doctor will give additional instructions if necessary. Be prepared to provide a list of medications your pet is receiving, describe any allergies your pet is known to have, and state whether your pet has any metal implants, as such devices could interfere with the accuracy of the scan.

In some cases, ingestion of an oral contrast agent will be necessary to help define your pet’s gastrointestinal tract. Diarrhea may occur for up to 24 hours after the scan.

## What is the schedule on the day of my pet's CT scan? When can I pick up my pet?

On the day of the appointment, you will be asked to bring your pet to our facility between 7:30-9 a.m. At that time, please be prepared to fill out our Intake Form, which is also available online at <http://sfvs.net/ForPets/Forms.html>.

You will be able to pick up your pet when he or she is fully awake, usually in the late afternoon or early evening. We will contact you as soon as your pet is ready to go home.

## Is the procedure safe?

The risk to your pet from the CT scan is minimal; however, there are always risks associated with general anesthesia. Our staff is available to discuss your concerns and answer questions you may have about those risks. All pets are required to undergo routine blood testing to ensure that they are healthy enough to receive anesthesia. During and after the scan, your pet will be monitored closely by our experienced veterinary and nursing staff.

The small dose of radiation received during the scan is similar to the amount of radiation your pet is exposed to each year naturally from the environment. SFVS uses the lowest possible dose of radiation in order to minimize the level of exposure.

## Who reads the results of the scan? How long does it take to receive the results?

All CT images are reviewed by a veterinary radiologist who specializes in advanced imaging. The results of the scan will be available to you and your doctor within 24 hours after the scan is completed.

## How much does the scan cost? What forms of payment do you accept?

The cost of the scan varies with the details of each case. After you and your pet have met with an SFVS doctor, you will receive an estimate before your pet receives any diagnostic services or treatment. Our staff welcomes any questions you may have about the care plan.

Payment is expected at the time services are provided. We accept cash, check, MasterCard, Visa, American Express, CareCredit (for more information and an application form: [www.carecredit.com](http://www.carecredit.com)) and ChaseHealthAdvance (for more information and an application form: [www.chasehealthadvance.com](http://www.chasehealthadvance.com)).

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