

## What to expect when your pet gets a Spinal Tap

A spinal tap is performed if it is suspected that your pet has inflammation of the brain or spinal cord. This inflammation can be from infectious or noninfectious causes. Often times an MRI is performed before the tap to first to eliminate structural abnormalities. A spinal tap may then be performed if we need additional information as to the cause of your pet's symptoms and the MRI shows it is safe to perform a spinal tap.

Your pet will be under general anesthesia for the spinal tap. A small area is clipped and sterilized at the base of the skull where the tap will be performed. Spinal fluid is then collected with a small needle and microscopically analyzed by our board certified veterinary neurologist. This analysis consists of a protein count, as well as a cellular examination and further testing of this fluid may be warranted based on this analysis. Testing of spinal fluid can be more sensitive than testing blood samples and your neurologist may want to use the fluid to test for common infectious diseases, such as protozoal, fungal, and viral diseases.

While people report significant side effects from spinal taps such as severe head aches, we do not recognize these signs in our pets. Most pets are eating soon after recovering from the spinal tap, which is a sign that they are not painful. Please call us at (703) 525.1549 if at any point your dog is not eating or shows other signs of discomfort.