

General Practice Service
Willows Information Sheets

Ultrasound investigations – what to expect





What is an ultrasound scan?

Ultrasound is a method of looking at the internal 'soft tissue' organs of the body. It will be familiar to anyone who has had a baby in recent years, where ultrasound is used routinely to monitor the baby in the womb. In animals we also use the ultrasound machine to monitor pregnancy but more commonly to look at the structure of the internal organs of the body. This will usually be part of more extensive investigations into illness and will often be accompanied by blood tests, radiographs (X-rays) and possibly other investigative procedures.

Will my pet need an anaesthetic for the ultrasound to be performed?

It is not usually necessary to anaesthetise patients for ultrasound investigations, although some pets will benefit from mild sedation so that they remain relaxed and motionless for the procedure. The temperament of your pet and any medical conditions will be taken into account when deciding this. For ultrasound investigations of the heart (echocardiography) we try to avoid sedating the patient as this can change the movement and measurements of the heart muscle.

What happens on the day of the scan?

Usually, we admit patients for the morning when they are due to have ultrasound investigations. We normally ask for them to have been starved overnight but allowed access to water until they come in.

In order to perform the ultrasound scan we need to clip patches of hair where the probe is placed on the skin – this allows better images to be obtained. The skin is cleaned and a clear gel is applied – this also improves the contact between the probe and the skin, giving a better image.

Sometimes, samples of tissue or fluid will be taken under the guidance of ultrasound, but this will be discussed with you in advance.

In some cases we need to repeat ultrasound scans after a given period of time to monitor the progress of a condition.

If you have any queries or concerns regarding your pet's ultrasound examination, please do not hesitate to [contact us](#).

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