Rigid endoscopy
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What is endoscopy?

Endoscopy involves the use of an endoscope – a small camera mounted on a thin probe – to look inside organs which could otherwise be very difficult to inspect. A rigid endoscope is one which cannot be bent to go around corners, unlike a flexible endoscope which is often used to inspect the inside of the digestive tract (stomach and intestines).

Rigid endoscopy is an extremely useful diagnostic, and in some cases therapeutic, tool in soft tissue, internal medicine and orthopaedic (arthroscopy) case management. Willows has an extensive range of state-of-the-art Karl Storz endoscopic equipment that significantly enhances our diagnostic and treatment options for the patients in our care.
What rigid endoscopy procedures are used at Willows?

**Rhinoscopy:**
Rigid rhinoscopy is the placing of an endoscope into the nasal cavity. It is an integral step in the investigation of dogs and cats with nasal disease. Conditions such as neoplasia (cancer) of the nasal cavity, fungal rhinitis (inflammation of the nasal cavity due to fungal infection), nasal foreign body and lymphocytic-plasmacytic rhinitis (‘allergic’ nasal disease) all benefit from this diagnostic technique which works alongside the top quality computed tomography (CT) scanning facilities at Willows.

**Cystoscopy:**
Cystoscopy is the examination of the inside of the bladder and, in females, the entire urethra. This can be a very useful tool for investigation of the urogenital tract (the urinary and reproductive systems) in dogs. It is commonly used in the diagnosis of anatomical abnormalities that can contribute to urinary incontinence. At Willows we also have the capability to perform collagen injections that can be used as a minimally invasive treatment option in some cases of incontinence.

**Laparoscopy:**
Laparoscopy is the term given to the endoscopic examination of the abdominal cavity (‘tummy’), either for diagnostic or treatment purposes. In certain circumstances this ‘key-hole’ surgical technique can provide a number of advantages over conventional surgery. Where its use is appropriate, the key-hole technique usually involves two or three small incisions (cuts) rather than the single large incision associated with conventional surgery.

**Advantages of laparoscopy over conventional surgery include:**
- Reduced pain from the surgical wounds – the pet is more comfortable post-operatively
- Smaller surgical wounds
- Fewer stitches
- A faster return to normal activity, due to improved patient comfort and reduced scar tissue formation

Procedures suitable for laparoscopy include:

- Ovariectomy (neutering or ‘Spay’ operation) – see next section
- Retained testicle removal (where the testicle does not ‘drop’ into the scrotum during development, but instead remains in the abdomen)
- Biopsy procedures (small samples of tissues taken for analysis):
  - Liver
  - Spleen
  - Pancreas
- Abdominal exploration – inspecting the inside of the abdomen (‘tummy’) for signs of disease
- Laparoscopic assisted gastropexy (fixing the stomach in the correct position inside the abdomen)
- Laparoscopic assisted cystostomy (placing a tube to drain urine out of the bladder)

When you discuss your cat or dog’s condition with the specialist at Willows they will be happy to advise you on the suitability of laparoscopic surgery for the individual needs of your pet.

**Ovariectomy (bitch or cat spay/neutering):**
We are very pleased to be able to offer ‘key-hole’ neutering surgery. The procedure can be performed on patients registered with Willows’ first opinion practice or those referred by their regular practice specifically for this procedure.

The procedure involves making two small incisions in the skin that will normally be closed without the need for external stitches. The operation is performed on a day-patient basis – most pets do not need to stay in overnight, being re-united with their owners later the same day.

The procedure involves removal of the ovaries, leaving the uterus (the womb) in place. Conventional spay (neutering) of cats and bitches (female dogs) usually involves removal of the ovaries and uterus together (ovario-hysterectomy). The key-hole ovariectomy operation is quicker, less involved and less painful than the conventional spay procedure. There is no evidence that leaving the uterus behind results in any increased risk of incontinence or womb infection in the future when compared to conventional surgery.

If your bitch is coming to us for a laparoscopic spay, she should be starved from 10pm the night before surgery but can have water freely available until the time of admission to the hospital. The surgery is normally performed in the morning, and on the day of the procedure you will need to book an early appointment to see the specialist who will be performing the surgery. Your pet should be able to go home in the afternoon/evening.
Those patients referred from other practices need to come with a full medical history from your vet and a letter or fax from your vet stating that they are in agreement with the referral for neutering. At the time of discharge you will receive a detailed post-operative care sheet, and your vet will be sent information regarding your pet’s procedure and postoperative care requirements. A visit to your vet is generally recommended 2 to 3 days after the procedure in order to check your dog or cat’s progress.

As with humans undergoing laparoscopic surgery, we do ask that we are given permission to convert to a more conventional approach during the procedure if necessary. This is only required in the unlikely event that unforeseen circumstances arise which result in the risks to your pet being reduced by converting to conventional surgery.

If you are interested in requesting referral to Willows for laparoscopic neutering then please discuss it with your vet and ask if he or she would be willing to refer your pet for the procedure. Upon receipt of the referral information you will be able to make an appointment for surgery on a date that is convenient for you and your pet. As with conventional neutering of female dogs, we recommend that the surgery is performed 2 to 3 months following a season.

**Thoracoscopy:**
Thoracoscopy is the examination of the inside of the chest using an endoscope.

The rigid endoscope techniques that are so useful in the abdomen (tummy) can also be applied to some cases requiring thoracic surgery (surgery on the chest cavity). Not all surgical chest cases or conditions are suitable for an endoscopic procedure and therefore the specific needs of your pet will be discussed with you in detail by the specialist at the time of the referral appointment.

*If you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.*