Pre-operative preparation

When it’s time for the surgery, the veterinarian usually asks the veterinary nurse to retrieve the animal from its cage.

In doing so, be sure that you have correctly identified the animal. Check the animal’s records to confirm this and double-check the procedures to be undertaken.

If the animal is to undergo a desexing operation, check the sex of the animal.

Some animals are in such a filthy condition that they may need a bath before they can be prepared for surgery.

Before dogs are anaesthetised, it is a good idea to take them for a walk to empty their bowels and bladder.

From the figure above, the hair is removed from the animal by using electric clippers equipped with a number 40 blade. A margin of at least ten centimetres around the proposed incision site should be clipped.

Preparing the surgical site

Clippers are expensive pieces of equipment and need to be looked after correctly. You should use only sharp, clean blades. Blunt blades and broken teeth cause clipper rash and grazes. Hang them up or put them away after use.
The equipment should be cleaned before storage. You should only use commercially prepared solutions or kerosene for cleaning.

Cleaning the skin—the surgical scrub

Remove clipped hair with a vacuum cleaner. Vacuum the non-clipped hair around the site so that you totally remove all the loose hair.

Clean the skin after removing the hair. This usually involves the application and removal of several different antiseptic preparations.

Note: Taking care of the animal’s skin is an important part of pre-operative care. Some of the antiseptics can cause allergic skin reactions so read the label carefully before using them.

Applying the scrub

Follow these step-by-step instructions:

1. Wash your hands thoroughly before starting.
2. Apply an antiseptic with a detergent base on moistened cotton wool—this is usually called a ‘scrub’.
3. You should always start from the incision site and work your way out to the hairline.
4. Work onto the skin using a figure eight motion so that lather is achieved.
Removing the scrub

To remove the scrub you should:

1. Remove the scrub from the skin using fresh moistened cotton wool in what is called an aseptic manner, starting from the site of the incision to the periphery of the clipped area.

2. Discard the swab.

This is repeated as many times as necessary to gain a thoroughly clean surface.

The final application of skin antiseptic does not occur until the animal has been transported into theatre.