How to talk with clients about preanaesthetic testing

**Example Dialogue**

This is a sample script of a discussion that would usually take place on the morning of surgery after you’ve greeted your client.

**Technician talks to client about preanaesthetic testing:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vet Nurse:</th>
<th>Thanks for bringing Smokey in. Before her surgery, we’ll perform preanaesthetic blood work to ensure she’s in good health. Blood work is like an internal exam. It helps us check organ function and gives us a better understanding of red blood cell, white blood cell and platelet counts so we can identify potential health risks before we administer the anaesthesia. The blood work also gives us a baseline as part of Smokey’s medical history. We use the baseline to measure her future health status more easily and to identify any subtle changes early.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pet Owner:</td>
<td>What happens if you find something wrong?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vet Nurse:</td>
<td>If any of Smokey’s results have us concerned, we can change the anaesthetic procedure or take other precautions to reduce the risk of possible complications during surgery and ensure she’s safe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pet Owner:</td>
<td>OK. So what tests do you recommend? And how much will they cost?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vet Nurse:</td>
<td>We recommend a complete blood count, a comprehensive chemistry, including electrolytes, and urinalysis. The cost is $X. Here’s a brochure that describes each of the tests in more detail. If you have more questions after you’ve read it, we’ll be happy to discuss them with you. (Give clients the IDEXX brochure for reference. It will help them remember what you’ve talked about in the exam room.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pet Owner:</td>
<td>OK, thank you.</td>
</tr>
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**Common Client Questions**

Here are some common questions and answers that can help clients understand and agree with preanaesthetic testing.

**Q: Why does this cost so much?**

**A:** This price includes all the services required for your pet’s surgery, including:

- A physical exam to evaluate her physical health, similar to what your own doctor performs.
- Comprehensive preanaesthetic blood tests to evaluate liver and kidney function and to rule out dangerous conditions, such as diabetes, pancreatitis, infection and cancer. These same tests are often required before you or I have major surgery or anaesthesia.
- Her stay in our hospital, which includes nursing care and monitoring.
- Customised anaesthesia, based on the findings of the physical exam and preanaesthetic evaluation.
- The surgery itself.
- (Describe other services, if required, such as an IV Catheter, pain management, fluid therapy, pulse ox monitoring, etc., including why it benefits the pet/pet owner. Be sure to include ALL services, including nail trims, dental inspections, etc.)
Q: Are all these services really necessary?
A: All of these services ensure your pet receives the best care possible. We want to do as much as we can to eliminate any risks, stress or pain that might be associated with your pet’s procedure.

Q: Are the preanaesthetic tests really necessary?
A: We recommend these tests for three very important reasons:

1) We screen your pet for a variety of internal diseases and conditions that could cause surgical or anaesthetic complications.
   - We evaluate kidney function: The kidneys act as a filter, removing waste and toxins from the body. If they’re not functioning properly, there could be problems during surgery because your pet may not be able to filter out the anaesthesia, complicating her recovery.
   - We evaluate liver function: The liver’s function affects all other major organs. If there’s a liver problem, it could impact other areas of the body.
   - We evaluate glucose levels: Glucose can be too high (diabetes) or too low (hypoglycaemia). Either one can have a devastating impact on your pet during surgery. (NOTE: For puppies and kittens, focus on hypoglycaemia. They have very little fat reserve and are usually fasted pre- and post-surgery.)
   - We identify if your pet has underlying conditions that may not be apparent during the physical exam.
     - If your pet’s blood is not clotting properly, it can be crucial in any situation that could cause bleeding.
     - If your pet’s ability to fight infection is impaired, she may get sick or have trouble recovering from surgery.
     - If your pet has trouble breathing, it can cause trouble during the surgery and during recovery.

2) We can tailor your pet’s anaesthetic, pain management and recovery protocols to her individual needs. For example, we evaluate electrolyte levels before surgery. If there is an imbalance, we can adjust her fluid therapy treatment to improve recovery and overall health.

3) These tests provide an important individual baseline for your pet’s health. We can use these test results in the future to monitor her health, including kidney, liver, pancreas and glucose function. We’ll provide you with a copy of the results for your file, as well. These are very helpful when you travel or if you have to visit another clinic where they don’t have your pet’s health history.