TIPS FOR PREPARING THE PAW FOR ASEPTIC SURGERY

Steven F. Swaim, DVM, MS
College of Veterinary Medicine
Auburn University, AL

For optimum aseptic paw preparation, a pair of towel forceps are placed in the distal end of the nails of digits 3 and 4. A length of gauze is threaded through the rings of the forceps and tied. This gauze is then used to suspend the limb/paw from a support stand for intravenous fluid. Thus, it is possible to scrub and place antiseptic solution to all paw surfaces. Chlorhexidine and povidone iodine soaps have been found to provide effective antiseptic preparation in the absence of wound drainage fluid. However, it should be remembered that povidone iodine is inactivated by blood and organic material; therefore, if an open or draining wound is present on the paw, chlorhexidine preparations could provide better residual antibacterial properties.

Prior to wrapping the paw/limb for transport from the preparation area to the surgical area, and after removing the towel forceps from the third and fourth nails, the nails should be trimmed. Any cavity remaining on the concave nail surface should be examined and cleared of any debris with an 18 gauze hypodermic needle. Antiseptic solution should be applied to the area after cleansing.

Following aseptic preparation of the paw, it can be wrapped for transport to the surgical area. A box of aluminum foil, obtained from a food market can be autoclaved. A segment of foil is removed from the box aseptically and is wrapped around the paw/limb. It is impervious to fluids, does not require fixation to the limb with towel forceps or ties. It can be easily removed from the limb in the surgery room prior to draping for surgery.

References