TIBETAN MASTIFF & ANESTHESIA: CRITICAL CARE DATA SHEET

⚠ IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR VETERINARIANS & OWNERS

🐾 BREED OVERVIEW

Breed: Tibetan Mastiff
Origin: Himalayas (Tibet, Nepal, India)
Type: Working, Livestock Guardian Dog (LGD)
Weight: 40–72+ kg (88–160+ lbs)
Temperament: Stoic, protective, intelligent, highly bonded
Lifespan: 10–14 years
Unique Traits:

- Primitive breed type with unpredictable drug responses
- Slow metabolic processing of sedatives and anaesthetics
- High pain threshold masks clinical distress

💉 UNDERSTANDING THE RISK

Tibetan Mastiffs have a **heightened risk of complications from anaesthesia** due to:

- **Slow metabolism of injected or oral drugs**
- **Sensitivity to sedation and restraint**
- **Increased likelihood of adverse or delayed reactions**
- **High pain tolerance masking internal issues**
- **Breed-specific responses inherited across bloodlines**

These traits make **standard anaesthesia protocols potentially dangerous** if not carefully adjusted.

MINIMIZING ANESTHETIC RISKS

⚙ Drug Metabolism Matters

Once administered, anaesthetic agents whether oral or intravenous remain in the body until metabolized and eliminated, primarily via the **liver and kidneys**. The duration of this process varies with:

- Age, weight, and fat-to-muscle ratio
- Liver/kidney efficiency
- Overall hydration and health status
- Type and dosage of drug administered

In Tibetan Mastiffs, this elimination can take **multiple hours or several days**, which raises the risk of **drug accumulation**, **delayed reactions**, and **organ strain**.

🌬 Inhalation Anaesthesia: The Safer Choice

Many experienced breeders and owners now **avoid injectable anaesthetics whenever possible**. Instead, they work exclusively with veterinarians who use **gas inhalation anaesthesia**, which:

- Is exhaled through the lungs rather than metabolized by organs
- Reduces systemic toxicity
- Allows tighter control of anaesthetic depth
- Promotes faster, more predictable recovery

Preferred inhalation anaesthetics include:

- **Isoflurane (**a volatile anesthetic, primarily used for inducing and maintaining general anesthesia during medical procedures. It is administered by inhalation)
- **Sevoflurane** (a volatile inhalation - anaesthetic used for inducing and maintaining general anaesthesia during surgical and procedural interventions)
- **Desflurane (**a volatile inhalational anaesthetic used to induce and maintain general anaesthesia**)**
- *(Supplementally)* Nitrous Oxide mixed with oxygen

Gas delivery is typically via a mask or endotracheal tube. Once discontinued, the drug is expelled naturally with every breath.

💧 IV FLUID THERAPY IS ESSENTIAL

Tibetan Mastiffs must be placed on IV fluids throughout any procedure involving anaesthesia.
Fluid therapy:

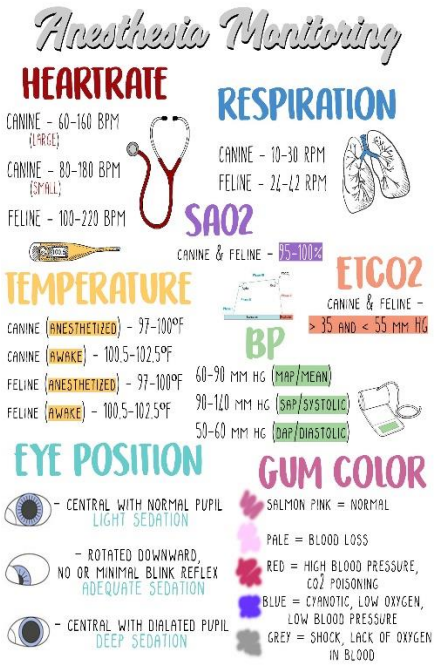
- Maintains **blood pressure and perfusion**
- Supports **kidney and liver function**
- Assists in **drug clearance**
- Aids **temperature regulation**
- Shortens **recovery time** and improves surgical outcomes

Fluid administration is non-negotiable during sedation or surgical anaesthesia for this breed.

💊 DRUGS TO USE WITH EXTREME CAUTION

Drug	Risk
Acepromazine	Prolonged sedation, risk of hypotension, possible fatal collapse
Ketamine	Excitatory response, dissociation, increased stress or panic
Xylazine	Cardiac depression, bradycardia, hypotension – avoid completely
Barbiturates	Slow metabolism and unpredictable response
Propofol	Can be used if titrated slowly; risk of apnea if bolused

✓ SAFER ALTERNATIVES



Pre-medication:

- Dexmedetomidine + Butorphanol
- OR Midazolam + Butorphanol (lower cardiovascular effect)

Induction:

- Alfaxalone (preferred)
- OR Propofol titrated slowly to effect

Maintenance:

- Isoflurane or Sevoflurane
- IV fluids and warming blanket or heat pad
- Oxygen supplementation and continuous monitoring

PRE-PROCEDURE SAFETY CHECKLIST

✓ Full bloodwork (CBC, liver, kidney function)
✓ ECG for dogs over 6 years
✓ Accurate weight & body condition scoring
✓ Quiet, stress-free handling and induction
✓ Pre-anaesthesia discussion with a **Tibetan Mastiff - knowledgeable breeder**
✓ Review previous anaesthetic history or bloodline patterns

📞 BREEDER INPUT COULD SAVE A LIFE

Before any procedure involving anaesthesia, contact your breeder.

Experienced breeders may be aware of:

- Drug reactions seen in littermates or parents
- Preferred agents and dosages based on bloodline
- Vets with successful experience with the line

This information may prevent serious or fatal complications.

🛑 POST-ANESTHESIA MONITORING: WATCH FOR DAYS

After anaesthesia, **monitor your Tibetan Mastiff for a full week**. Toxicity may present late.

Watch for:

Symptom	Possible Cause
Lethargy past 48 hours	Organ strain or delayed drug clearance
Lack of appetite or thirst	Liver overload, nausea, dehydration
Limping or unstable movement	Neurological impact or drug accumulation
Pale gums, vomiting, panting	Emergency — contact your vet immediately

These can be signs of **toxic build-ups**, which in this breed can escalate quickly and silently.

❌ RED FLAGS IN A VETERINARY CLINIC

Be cautious if a clinic:

- Dismisses breed-specific anaesthetic risks
- Uses Acepromazine (use in dogs for tranquilization and as a preanesthetic agent). The injectable form of acepromazine is FDA-approved for use in dogs and cats for sedation, to alleviate itching, help relieve vomiting associated with motion sickness, and as a preanesthetic agent) without adjustment
- Does not provide IV fluids or overnight care
- Uses standard dog protocols across all breeds
- Will not allow you to speak to the vet directly

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR VET

- “What is your anaesthesia protocol for large guardian breeds?”
- “Do you use gas anaesthesia and IV fluid therapy?”
- “Have you worked with Tibetan Mastiffs or similar breeds before?”
- “Will my dog be monitored closely during recovery?”

- "Can I speak with the anaesthesiologist or senior veterinarian before the procedure?"

☠ KETAMINE: DOCUMENTED CASES OF FATALITY IN TIBETAN MASTIFFS

The anaesthetic **ketamine**, commonly used in veterinary medicine for induction or sedation, poses a **significant and proven risk to Tibetan Mastiffs**. Based on **firsthand accounts and breeder documentation**, there have been **multiple confirmed fatalities** involving the use of ketamine in this breed.

! What's Especially Alarming:

In numerous cases, the Tibetan Mastiffs appeared to **initially recover without incident**. They woke from anaesthesia, stood, walked, and even ate or drank—only to experience **sudden and irreversible collapse hours or days later**. In most cases, the collapse was due to **cardiac arrest**, **seizure activity**, or **respiratory failure**.

These events often occurred **after the dog had been discharged** from the clinic, creating a false sense of post-anaesthesia safety. This suggests that **delayed-onset systemic or neurological complications** were at play—most likely related to:

- **Drug accumulation in fat or muscle tissue**
- **Heightened neuro-excitability or dysphoric rebound** (a known issue with ketamine in primitive/guardian breeds)
- **Cardiopulmonary instability not immediately detectable during basic recovery observation**
- **Silent hepatic or renal overload that progressed rapidly once the dog returned to its home environment**

🔬 Why Ketamine Is Especially Risky for This Breed

Tibetan Mastiffs have demonstrated:

- **Unpredictable reactions** to ketamine, even at adjusted doses
- **Extreme sensitivity to excitatory anaesthetics**
- **Inefficient clearance** of dissociative agents, especially when used in combination with other drugs like xylazine or diazepam

Even when ketamine is paired with sedatives or pre-medications, its use in Tibetan Mastiffs should be considered **high-risk and strongly discouraged**. The drug's **dissociative properties** - which are useful in many breeds can cause **neurotoxicity**, seizures, or fatal autonomic responses in this breed due to its unique neurochemical and metabolic profile.

⊘ OUR FIRM WARNING:

> **Based on multiple confirmed deaths and near-miss incidents**, we strongly advise that ketamine **not be used under any circumstances** in Tibetan Mastiffs, regardless of age, weight, or surgical need unless no other option exists and the situation is life-saving, and even then only under advanced monitoring in a specialty hospital setting.

If your veterinarian proposes ketamine in any combination or protocol, **you must object and request a safer alternative** - such as **alfaxalone** or **gas induction under sedation**.

📣 OWNER & VET COMMUNICATION POINTS:

- **Clearly inform your veterinarian** that ketamine has caused fatal reactions in your breed and provide examples if needed.
- **Do not accept ketamine-based protocols**, even when mixed with other sedatives.
- **Document and share** any unusual post-anaesthesia responses, especially involving disorientation, tremors, or sudden collapse.
- **Consult your breeder** or guardian-breed veterinarian about successful past protocols.