What is medical imaging?

Medical imaging is a diagnostic tool that allows veterinarians to take pictures of the inside of your pet to diagnose an ailment or injury. A major benefit of medical imaging is that it is noninvasive, which means that no incision is necessary to produce an image of your pet.

Medical imaging is usually recommended when a veterinarian believes there is a problem with your pet that cannot be detected using a basic physical exam or blood test.

See more clearly.

Medical imaging is a low-risk way of gaining insight into your pet’s health. By looking at medical images, veterinarians can make quick and accurate diagnoses in order to treat your pet as soon as possible.
Will my pet need anesthesia or sedation?

This depends on how nervous or comfortable your pet is during the procedure, and to some degree on the type of imaging test performed.

For most x-ray procedures, no sedation or anesthesia is needed unless your pet is in pain and such options make your pet more comfortable. The same goes for ultrasound examinations.

On the other hand, anesthesia is almost always needed for CT and MRI examinations because it is very important that your pet remains still while images are being acquired. With some newer CT scanners, images are obtained very quickly, which has allowed veterinarians and specialists to develop techniques to perform the tests with only sedation.

Does medical imaging always provide the final diagnosis?

That’s the goal, and occasionally it is possible to obtain a final answer from an imaging test. For example, x-rays might reveal a fracture as the cause of a limp or an ultrasound examination might clearly show a kidney stone.

However, many times the results of multiple tests are needed to determine a diagnosis. In fact, imaging tests often reveal the need for a totally different type of test, such as a biopsy. As a pet owner, you should be prepared for a logical progression of fact-finding, through multiple tests, to determine a final diagnosis of your pet’s ailment.

Getting to know your radiologist

Medical images are very complex and a veterinary radiologist may be needed to interpret the results accurately. Radiologists are licensed veterinarians who have completed 3-4 years of post-DVM training in diagnostic imaging interpretation and have passed a comprehensive certification examination.