

Understanding X-rays and Ultrasound

Family Matters

One of the questions we often hear is:

"Why does my pet need an X-ray or an ultrasound?"

Both are incredibly valuable diagnostic tools, but they do different jobs.

At Amity, we don't recommend tests simply because we can. We recommend them because they help us understand what's happening inside your pet's body, allowing us to make the right diagnosis and the best treatment plan.

Our purpose is to **Empower You Through Education**, helping you understand not just *what* we're recommending, but *why*.

Looking Beneath the Surface

A physical examination tells us a great deal, but we can only assess what we can see and feel.

X-rays and ultrasound allow us to look inside the body without surgery, helping us investigate problems that would otherwise remain hidden.

Think of them as different tools in the same toolbox—each with its own strengths.

What Do X-rays Show?

X-rays are excellent for looking at **bones and dense structures**.

They're commonly used to diagnose:

- Broken bones.
- Arthritis.
- Hip and elbow problems.
- Swallowed objects.
- Some bladder stones.
- Heart enlargement.
- Lung disease.

X-rays provide a still image, allowing us to assess the size, shape and position of structures inside the body.

What Does Ultrasound Show?

Ultrasound is better for examining **soft tissues and moving organs**.

It allows us to look at:

- The liver.
- Kidneys.
- Spleen.
- Bladder.
- Intestines.
- Pregnancy.
- The heart (specialist cardiac ultrasound).

Unlike X-rays, ultrasound creates real-time moving images, allowing us to watch organs functioning as we examine them.

Why Might My Pet Need Both?

X-rays and ultrasound don't compete—they complement one another.

For example, an X-ray may show that an organ looks enlarged, while an ultrasound helps us understand **why**.

Sometimes one test provides the answer.

Sometimes combining both gives us the clearest picture.

Our goal is always to recommend the investigation that is most likely to answer the clinical question.

Why Does My Pet Need Sedation or an Anaesthetic for X-rays?

Unlike people, we can't ask our patients to hold perfectly still or position themselves exactly where we need them.

For X-rays to be truly diagnostic, your pet often needs to be placed in very precise positions. Even small movements or poor positioning can make the images difficult to interpret or mean important problems are missed.

For this reason, **most X-rays are performed under sedation or a general anaesthetic**. This allows us to position your pet accurately, obtain the highest-quality images, minimise stress and ensure the procedure is carried out safely and comfortably.

Ultrasound is different. Most pets can have an ultrasound while awake, simply lying comfortably on a padded table. Occasionally, a small patch of fur is clipped to improve image quality.

Better Pictures, Better Decisions

The purpose of diagnostic imaging isn't simply to produce interesting pictures.

It's to help us make better decisions.

The more accurately we understand what's happening inside your pet, the more confidently we can recommend the most appropriate treatment—or sometimes avoid unnecessary treatment altogether.

At Amity, we'll always explain why we're recommending a particular test, what information we're hoping to gain and how the results may influence your pet's care.

Because the best decisions are informed decisions.

And informed guardians make the best advocates for their pets.

Because they're not just your pet.

They're family.

Family Matters.

If you need more information, book an appointment with an Amity vet. We're here to Empower You Through Education and help you become your pet's greatest advocate.