

Feeding tubes are most commonly used on the Small Animal Internal Medicine service to support ill patients while they recover from a temporary illness.

These tubes are tolerated remarkably well and can ensure that your pet receives its full food and water requirements during the important recuperation period. Animals are still able to eat and drink with them in place and so they are used to transition ill pets back into their usual feeding routines. Feeding tubes can also make it easier to give multiple oral medications in pets with long-term diseases.

These tubes are placed under general anesthesia. An esophageal feeding tube (also known as an E-tube) is placed through the skin and into the esophagus. These are typically used for days to weeks. A stomach tube (sometimes called PEG tube or G-tube) can be placed through the body wall directly into the stomach using endoscopic equipment, thus avoiding the need for surgery. These tubes have to stay in place for a minimum of two weeks, but may remain in place for life.

The most common complication of feeding tubes is infection at the tube site. Therefore owners need to change their pets' bandages every 1-2 days and monitor their insertion sites. Special collars can be used in place of bandage material, making maintenance of these tubes at home even easier.