



MANOR
VETERINARY CLINIC

Neutering your dog



Sterilisation, castration and spaying - why and when

Sadly, a large number of puppies are born every year that are unable to find good homes and as a result, many healthy dogs may stray or be destroyed. Having your pet neutered will not only help to reduce these numbers, it is also one of the simple and practical ways to safeguard their health and welfare.

What does neutering involve?

Both castration in the male dog (to remove the testicles) and spaying in the bitch (to remove the uterus (womb) and ovaries), are operations which require a general anaesthetic. Although there is always a risk with any anaesthetic or surgery, these are operations that are the most frequently carried out by vets and there is little chance of anything going wrong if your animal is fit and healthy. Your pet should be starved from the night before to reduce anaesthetic risks further. Your pet should be ready to return home on the same day as the surgery, as soon as the anaesthetic has worn off. You will notice some shaved patches on the fur from the operation and catheter site. They should be kept quiet and walked only on a lead until the stitches are removed after 10-14 days.

What are the benefits of neutering?

Females

To prevent unwanted pregnancies

A normal bitch will be in season twice a year, for three weeks each time. If she is allowed to come into contact with a male dog this time, she can become pregnant. Female dogs in heat will be extremely attractive to males and will need to be kept securely indoors for this time. She will also bleed from the vulva and may show behavioural changes.

To prevent false pregnancies

After a season, a bitch will undergo the same hormonal changes whether she is pregnant or not. This can result in a false pregnancy (also known as a phantom or pseudopregnancy) where the bitch will behave as if she is pregnant and may produce milk.

To prevent pyometra

Pyometra is a serious condition, in which the uterus becomes filled with fluid then infected. The condition is common, particularly in middle aged animals that have not had puppies and tends to occur in the false pregnancy period, 9 weeks after a season. Symptoms include lethargy, excessive drinking, loss of appetite, abdominal distension and sometimes a vulval discharge. The treatment is an emergency hysterectomy and without prompt treatment the bitch may die.

To reduce the risk of mammary (breast) cancer

Early neutering (before the first season) greatly reduces the risk that a bitch will develop mammary cancer later on in life. This protective effect is gradually reduced after each season and after the third season there is no protective effect against mammary tumours.

Males

Reducing unwanted behaviour

Male hormones, such as testosterone, are linked with various sexual behaviour problems. These include inappropriate mounting and roaming to search for bitches in heat (which may result in a car accident). Entire males are more likely to urine mark. Castration can reduce or eliminate some forms of aggression as well as preventing the passing on of any genetic tendency to become aggressive. It should be remembered that castration may not solve all behavioural problems as they often have a learned component if they have already become established.

Medical benefits

Castration eliminates the possibility of testicular cancer and greatly reduces the chance a dog may suffer from prostatic disease, which are fairly common and serious problems of older entire male dogs. Castration also reduces the risk of perianal tumours and perineal hernias.

Population control

As mentioned above, an entire male may roam vast distances to find a mate. Castration reduces this and prevents unwanted litters.

Are there any problems or side effects?

All operations that require a general anaesthetic involve a certain amount of risk and on rare occasions there may be complications after the operation. Known complications include excessive bleeding during the operation (in which case intravenous fluids will be administered) or problems with the wound site afterwards. It is important that your dog does not lick or chew at the wound site as this can lead to it opening up or becoming infected. However, complications are extremely rare.

The main side effect of neutering is that it reduces energy requirements. It is important to monitor your dog's weight after neutering and reduce the amount of food they are given to avoid weight gain.

A small number of female dogs develop bladder weakness after neutering and may dribble small amounts of urine especially when lying down. This urinary incontinence is more of a problem in some breeds of dogs than others and many can develop this problem even if they are not neutered. It can usually be controlled with daily medication.

When should my dog be neutered?

We recommend neutering both dogs and bitches at around 5-6 months old. It is especially important in bitches to spay before the first season to have the maximum benefit of reducing the likelihood of mammary cancer later in life. Castrating a male dog before he reaches sexual maturity will reduce the likelihood of him developing behavioural problems. There is no evidence that early neutering harms a dog's later health and physical development.

There is no upper age limit for neutering your dog. You may wish to neuter your dog if you acquire them as an adult or to neuter them once they have retired as a breeding animal. Male dogs are sometimes neutered later on in life to treat diseases such as prostate problems or to help with behavioural problems. However, it should be remembered that the older the male is, the more likely they will continue to show unwanted behaviours.

If your bitch has had a season, she should be spayed 3-4 months after the season has ended to reduce the risks of anaesthetic problems and bleeding during surgery. Older bitches may be overweight and we will probably ask for her to lose weight before surgery to reduce any anaesthetic risks.

It is an old wives' tale that a bitch needs to have a litter of puppies. What your pet doesn't know she won't miss and neutering will save you the trouble and expense of looking after a pregnant dog, rearing a litter and finding homes for the puppies.

How much does neutering cost?

Please ask us for an estimate, as the prices for neutering vary with the size and age of animal.

**If you have any further questions about neutering,
please speak to a nurse or vet today**



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