



## **Neutering**

### **Bitches: Spaying/Ovariohysterectomy**

After reaching puberty female dogs come into season approximately every 6 months. This usually occurs from about 6 months old but varies due to breed and size of dog. The season usually lasts for about 3 weeks. During this time she will be extremely interesting to male dogs!

Unfortunately, un-neutered dogs have led to a huge number of unwanted litters and stray dogs filling our rescue centres.

Our recommendation is to neuter most bitches which are not going to be bred from. There are many health benefits to the bitch by neutering her at an early age:

1. Prevention of mammary tumours (breast cancer).
2. Prevention of developing pyometra (infection of the womb).  
This is a very common problem in older entire bitches and can be life threatening. The treatment is to spay the bitch to remove the infection. This is much riskier than a routine spay as the dog is usually much older and very ill. The operation is also more costly.
3. Prevention of false pregnancy. The changes in hormones in a bitch are the same in the two months following a season regardless of whether she becomes pregnant or not. Some may develop enlarged mammary glands, production of milk, nesting behaviour and going off their food.
4. Prevention of accidental pregnancy.

The timing of spaying is important. We recommend 3 months after the first season to ensure the blood supply to the uterus is at its smallest and the hormones are at a normal level. We routinely carry out pre-op checks to ensure your pet is healthy and check for any sign of milk still present in their mammary glands.

The disadvantages of spaying can include a slight change in coat colour or texture in some breeds, but should not cause a problem unless she is a show dog. In some cases early spaying may increase the possibility of a reduction in the growth of the vulva, with an increased risk of urinary incontinence later in life. However, this can occur in entire bitches also and can usually be treated medically. The most common change can be weight gain as an 'energy system' has been removed. This is entirely preventable, by reducing her calorie intake.

When your dog comes in for her operation she is dropped off in the morning, having not eaten after 8pm the night before. We routinely keep bitches overnight in order to maintain pain relief. They can go home the following day. We like to see them again 5 days after the operation to check how the wound is healing and reassess any necessary pain relief.



### Male dogs: Castration

Dogs usually reach puberty around 6-9 months of age. Some dogs will start to show dominance behaviour like food guarding or aggression. They may also try to mount furniture, toys or your leg! Some try to escape to seek out bitches in season. These behaviour patterns are less likely to develop if the dog is neutered at a young age.

Not all dogs develop behavioural problems, however there are also many health benefits to neutering your dog:

1. Prevention of testicular tumours.
2. Prevention and treatment of prostate problems which develop in many older dogs.
3. Prevention of perineal rupture, which is usually caused by prostate problems.
4. Prevention and treatment of peri-anal tumours, associated with increased testosterone levels, in older dogs.
5. Treatment of discharge from the penis and prepuce in young dogs.
6. Prevention and treatment of inappropriate behaviour – both sexual and aggressive.
7. Prevention of unwanted litters.
8. Treatment of cryptorchid dogs. These dogs only have one descended testicle, the other is retained in the abdomen. The retained testicle has a high chance of becoming cancerous due to the high temperature of the abdomen compared to the scrotum.

The disadvantages of castration can be a slight change in coat colour and texture, and the dogs are more prone to putting on a small amount of weight. As in the bitch, this is entirely preventable and controlled by reducing your dog's intake slightly. Most dogs' metabolism slows when growing from a juvenile to an adult and it is thus recommended that diets are altered at this stage anyway.

The improvements in any behaviour problem after castration will start to show in the 8-12 weeks following castration. The delay is caused by the testosterone levels gradually starting to fall as the hormone is metabolised.

The one contra-indication for castrating is in a very nervous dog which demonstrates fear aggression. Castration may make them even less confident and is unlikely to help with this type of aggression.

**If you have any concerns or questions regarding neutering your pet, please do not hesitate to contact us. We will be happy to answer any queries and discuss the different options with you.**