



NEUTERING

What is neutering?

Neutering is the general term used for the surgical removal of the reproductive organs in both male and female dogs.

- **Castration** is the removal of the testicles of the male dog.
- **Spaying** is the removal of the ovaries and uterus of the female dog.

Why is neutering so important?

Unless a dog is neutered, he or she could be responsible for the birth of many unwanted puppies. There are already thousands of stray and abandoned dogs in the UK and organisations like ours are left to pick up the pieces. Tragically many of these dogs are needlessly destroyed each year. If owners were to have their dogs neutered, much of this unnecessary suffering could be avoided.

Neutering can also prevent some illnesses that may occur in a dog's later life and also reduces the stress experienced by many un-neutered dogs living in a modern society, where they are expected to be 'nice', calm, family pets, without expressing their natural urges!

How much will it cost?

Castration will cost from £60 and spaying from £100, depending on the size of the dog and area of the country you live in. Dog owners receiving means-tested benefits or on low incomes may be able to have their dogs neutered for a reduced price via one of several neutering schemes around the UK. Contact us for further information.

Why is it so expensive?

The surgical equipment and medicines, including the anaesthetic, that are used for these operations are expensive. In addition there are also the costs of a skilled veterinary surgeon and nurse, who together will ensure that your dog is well cared for and closely monitored before, during and after the operation.

Remember though, that neutering your dog at an early age could well be a long-term investment, saving you the costs of treating certain sex-related conditions in later life. Raising a litter of puppies can be expensive and if your entire male dog roams in search of a mate he could be injured in a traffic accident or during a fight, resulting in high vet's bills.

When should I neuter my dog?

- Most vets are happy to neuter dogs of either sex from the age of about four months.
- The best time to neuter male dogs is between four and eighteen months of age depending on the breed, however, it can be carried out at any age.
- The best time to spay a bitch is either before or three months after their first season, as it is believed that this best reduces the chances of her developing mammary cancer in later life. If a bitch has already had a season then she should be spayed halfway between seasons.

What will happen if I don't neuter my dog?

Males

- Some male dogs may develop behavioural problems caused in part by testosterone (the male hormone produced in the testicles).
- This type of behaviour may include mounting other dogs of either sex, mounting people and objects around the house such as cushions or their own beds.
- Other problems you may encounter are territory marking (urinating) around the house, aggression (particularly towards other male dogs) and straying.

Females

- Your bitch could become pregnant. No matter how careful you are - accidents can happen.
- She may develop pyometra (a womb infection), which is a potentially fatal condition.
- She is more likely to develop mammary cancer in later life than a bitch neutered before her first season.
- If not pregnant, she may follow her seasons with false pregnancies. Many bitches will look as if they are pregnant and display obvious maternal behaviour, such as producing milk, nursing their toys or other objects such as shoes and making nests out of their bedding. They can show signs of increased panting and restlessness and be considerably distressed for periods of up to three months after the season has finished. As bitches may have seasons twice a year, they could be unwell and uncomfortable for up to half of their lives.
- It is not necessary to let your dog have a litter of puppies before neutering. This is an old wives tale which has no scientific basis. In fact, pregnancy can pose a significant health risk to your dog.

What are the advantages of neutering?

Males

- May reduce some sexual-related unwanted behaviour.
- Eliminates the risk of testicular cancer.
- Greatly reduces the risk of problems with the prostate gland.
- Reduces the risk of some anal and perineal tumours.
- Removes the stress of being a male entire dog in a modern society, where he has to share his territory and isn't allowed to express his normal 'male' behaviour.

Females

- Eliminates the risk of an unwanted pregnancy.
- Eliminates ovarian cysts and tumours and the potentially fatal pyometra.
- Reduces the risk of mammary cancer if spayed before or after the first season.
- Prevents the sexual advances of male dogs when out on walks, in your garden or outside the house.
- Eliminates the inconvenience and mess of the season (red/pink 'spotting' on the carpet and floor surfaces).
- Removes the distress associated with false pregnancies and the potential risk to her health from real pregnancies.

Are there any disadvantages of neutering?

- In some breeds neutering may change the coat texture.
- Neutering may increase the appetite of some dogs and they may become overweight, if allowed.
- Any minor discomfort felt by your dog immediately after the neutering operation is controllable with medication from your vet and will only last a few days.

Will it change my dog's personality or solve any behavioural problems?

- In general it should make your dog or bitch calmer, more reliable and less moody – but your dog's usual personality will still be there.
- If behavioural problems have started in your dog before he has been castrated then castration alone may not cure them. Some of these problems become a habit and therefore will need a course of retraining to achieve positive results. It can take quite a while before all of the testosterone has gone after castration, so you may not see a difference for three to four months after the operation.

Will it make my dog fat?

- Your dog will only get fat if you let him/her.
- You may need to reduce the amount of food that you give him/her or switch to a 'diet' food after neutering. Ask your vet for advice on this.
- If your dog has enough exercise and you feed him/her correctly, he/she will not get fat or lazy.

Isn't it all very unnatural?

- When taking into account the arguments surrounding neutering, the advantages and added health benefits far outweigh the disadvantages.
- Dogs cannot predict the future and so won't miss what they've never experienced.

By being a responsible owner and neutering your pet, you will be preventing the potential suffering of many unwanted dogs in the future.

Information about dog reproduction

Males

- *In most male dogs, the testicles will be present either at birth or shortly afterwards. In some dogs they will descend later, but if they are going to descend normally it is usually before four months of age.*
- *In some dogs, only one testicle descends. If surgery to remove the undescended testicle is not performed (castration) then it may develop a tumour in later life.*
- *Males will usually become sexually mature between the age of six and twelve months.*

Females

- *Bitches reach puberty between the ages of seven and twelve months.*
- *Most bitches will have a season (her fertile period) every six to twelve months throughout their lives.*
- *An average season lasts 21 days, with the most dangerous time for her to become pregnant around the middle of this time, although this can differ from dog to dog.*
- *During the season the bitch may suffer with abdominal discomfort, lethargy and a change in temperament ranging from excitability to irritability, or even depression. She may also lose interest in her food.*

For more information about Dogs Trust, to become a member, sponsor a long-term resident or help us in our campaigns please call 020 7837 0006 or write to:

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