

age.

In male dogs, as we have already mentioned there can be a change in behaviour. This may be a plus in some people's minds or a disadvantage in others. Like females, the males are more prone to putting on weight after the operation. Similar coat changes do also occur sometimes.

What are the alternatives?

In male dogs, there are no real alternatives.

In females, there are regular injections – every 5 months or so - which your dog can have which act as a contraceptive. These also stop the signs of coming into heat. These are large doses of the female hormone Progesterone, and can have adverse effects on the womb. In some bitches they may make a womb infection more likely! However, they do work and are an alternative, although we do not favour them because of the problems they may cause.

Where to have the op done?

Assuming you want to go ahead, the next question is where you want to have the operation done. You can pay a variable amount for the same operation at different vet practices. There are several reasons for this – the level of monitoring equipment; the number of nurses allocated to your pet before during and after the operation; the amount and type of pain-killer used before during and after the operation; the type of anaesthetic used and its safety factor; and the protocols in place to ensure that mistakes are not made. These are all areas where a practice can save money, and hence charge less.

However, money is only a small part – you really need to go somewhere where you are happy you can trust the nurses and vets to look after your pet as you would want them cared for.

We hope that we can provide that for you.

Ask at Reception and they will arrange for you to speak to the nurses or vets about any concerns you may have.

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NEUTERING YOUR DOG



This is one of a series of
information handouts
written by our vets and
nurses for our clients
and their pets

One of the things that you need to consider while your dog is still quite young is whether you are going to have him/her neutered or not. This handout has been prepared to try to help you to make the right decision.

What is neutering?

In the male dog, neutering involves a general anaesthetic and the surgical removal of both testicles. The bag (or scrotum) is left in place, so it may look as though nothing has been done! There are 3 or 4 stitches left in place, and your dog will need to stay on a lead for 10 days after the operation – until the stitches are removed by us.

We would recommend that neutering is carried out at about a year of age, but we do perform it at a younger age for specific problems.

Neutering has two effects on a dog – it makes him sterile so that he can no longer produce puppies; and it removes most of his male hormones (Testosterone).

We do not do vasectomies in dogs or cats.

In the female dog, the operation is also done under general anaesthesia, and the womb and both ovaries are removed. This is called an ovario-hysterectomy or spaying. The operation is more involved, as we have to go into the body to access these organs, and their blood supply is more complicated. After the op, there are 5-10 stitches left in place, and your dog will need to stay on a lead for 10 days after the operation – until the stitches are removed by us.

We would recommend that neutering is done at least 3 months after the first season, but before the second season. The first season is at about 9 months old for most dogs (though giant breeds can be as old as 18 months!), and the second season usually follows about 6 months later.

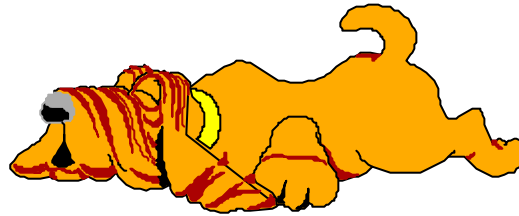
Neutering has two effects on a bitch – it makes her unable to have puppies, and it removes most of her female hormones (Oestrogen) which make her come into season.

What are the advantages of neutering?

The main advantage is no puppies. There are two aspects to this. Do you personally have the time to look after a litter of up to 12 puppies for two months (a full-time job!) and then to find good homes for all of them? Secondly, there are dogs in rescue centres all over the country. In some areas, they are put to sleep as there is inadequate kennel space. Should you be adding to the national excess of dogs?

In females, if you neuter a dog before her second season, then you reduce the chances of her getting mammary (breast) cancer at a later age by about 90%. After the second season, the benefits are far less.

Approximately 1 in 3 of females who have not been neutered develop a womb infection (called pyometra) when they get older, and this requires



an emergency operation to remove the womb at a time when your dog is both ill and older. Therefore the risk of the procedure is that much greater.

There is no consistent behavioural advantage to neutering a female dog, whatever you may hear!

However, **for a male dog**, the lower testosterone levels will often have a noticeable effect on them. It varies greatly with the individual, but some dogs become a bit less manic, more home-loving. Neutering will help to reduce hormone-induced behaviour such as mounting people or cushions, or straying or going off food if a bitch in the neighbourhood is on heat. It may reduce

urine marking around the house. It may help with certain types of aggression, particularly that directed at other male dogs. However, we would stress that there are many causes of aggression and we would never recommend neutering for aggression unless you had discussed your dog's individual situation with a vet first.

Medically, there are some conditions which are more likely in a dog who has not been neutered, such as prostate trouble when older, and of course testicular cancer.

What are the disadvantages?

Your pet does have to have an operation. Although this is all over in a few days, it may be an ordeal for your pet. Although the operation is routine, in that we perform it several times a day, it is still major surgery. As with any wound, there can be complications, such as swelling. However, we do all we can to make sure that these are kept to a minimum.

Once bitches have been spayed, they do have a tendency to put on weight, as they tend to want to eat more, and you will find that you need to adjust the food accordingly. A 'Light' version of one of the diets may be best. The loss of hormones can also have an effect on your pet's coat. This is seen mainly in those dogs with silky coats, such as Setters or Spaniels, and the coat often becomes quite wispy. This is purely a cosmetic change- -the coat is quite healthy – but you need to be warned about it!

As bitches get older their bladder control reduces and they can start to leak a little. This incontinence is more common in spayed bitches, and we sometimes give them some 'hormone replacement therapy' to help with this. In breeds which are very prone to incontinence, such as Dobermanns or Old English Sheepdogs, spaying may tip them into being incontinent at a young