

PROS AND CONS OF SPAYING AND NEUTERING IN DOGS

□ General Practice & Preventative Medicine - Surgery (General & Soft Tissue) - Theriogenology

OVERVIEW

It's time to start thinking about spaying or neutering your dog. But, maybe you are not quite sure if it is the right thing to do. If you're wondering whether you should just leave your dog as nature intended, consider the positive and negative aspects of spaying and neutering before making your decision.

First, what does neutering mean? Neutering is a procedure used to "de-sex" an animal. This procedure has been used to control animal population growth, reduce unwanted sexual behavior in pets, and decrease or eliminate the possibility of certain disease conditions later in life, such as pyometra or infection in the uterus.

Castration is a term used to describe the removal of the gonads (testicles) in male animals. Spaying is a term used to describe the sterilization procedure of females. The procedure of spaying most often consists of removal of both the ovaries and uterus, which is called an ovariectomy. Both procedures are performed under general anesthesia and both involve a surgical incision.

Neutering is done most commonly at or around six months of age. However, many veterinarians perform this procedure earlier – as early as 8 to 10 weeks in some situations. Early neutering can be done safely and has a number of advantages, especially in cases of pet adoption.

SPAYING – THE POSITIVE SIDE

- Spaying removes the risk of pregnancy.

Pet overpopulation is a serious issue and by allowing your dog to have litters, you are adding to the problem. Finding homes for your new family additions is not as easy as you may think. Even if you choose to keep the puppies, you now have the additional cost of vaccines, parasite control, toys and food for several pets. In addition to costs, the health of the mother can be in jeopardy during delivery. Some new mothers can have serious complications delivering puppies and can even develop health problems during nursing. All these potential problems can be avoided by spaying your dog.

- Spaying makes for a cleaner, calmer dog.

Without the drive to mate, your dog may be quieter and not prone to an incessant need to seek out a mate. The spayed dog no longer attracts males and their annoying advances and serenades. Dogs won't have a bloody discharge for several days while they are in heat. Without proper protective products, the discharge can stain sofas, bedding and carpets. Spayed pets are also easier to get along with. They tend to be more gentle and affectionate.

- Spaying keeps your dog healthier.

A final positive aspect of spaying your dog is that spayed pets tend to have fewer health problems. Spaying is the removal of the ovaries and uterus. Without these organs, ovarian cysts, uterine infections and cancer of the reproductive tract are no longer a concern. Studies have shown that dogs spayed before puberty have a significantly lower chance of developing breast cancer than unspayed dogs or dogs spayed later in life.

SPAYING – THE NEGATIVE SIDE

- Spaying means sterilization.

Spaying will result in the sterilization of your dog, and she will no longer have the ability to become pregnant. In the era of pet overpopulation with thousands of unwanted pets being euthanized each year, this is really not so bad.

- Spaying may cause weight gain.

Some pets may gain weight after spaying and as they get older. Just as with people, to lose weight we need to either diet or exercise. Cutting back on food intake or increasing your pet's activity will help reduce weight gain.

NEUTERING – THE POSITIVE SIDE

- Neutering removes the risk of pregnancy.

Pet overpopulation is a serious issue and by allowing your dog to breed, you are adding to the problem. Although you may not own the female dog, and you are not burdened with finding homes for those new puppies, someone else is. Even if you accept your responsibility and choose to keep the puppies, you now have the additional cost of vaccines, parasite control, toys and food for several pets.

- Neutering makes for a calmer dog.

Another positive aspect of neutering your dog is that neutering can result in a calmer, and sometimes cleaner, home. Without the drive to mate, your dog may be quieter and not prone to an incessant need to seek out a mate. The neutered dog no longer feels the need to seek out and serenade females. He no longer has the stress of needing to mark his territory and urinate throughout the house and yard. Neutered pets are also easier to get along with. They tend to be more gentle and affectionate. Neutered males tend to roam less and typically are not involved in as many fights with other animals.

- Neutering keeps your dog healthier.

A final positive aspect of neutering your dog is that neutered pets tend to have fewer health problems. Neutering is the removal of the testicles. Without these organs, testicular cancer is no longer a concern and the risk of prostate problems is reduced. For those people who would like to sterilize their dog but do not wish to alter his appearance, testicular implants are available.

NEUTERING – THE NEGATIVE SIDE

- Neutering is sterilization.

Neutering will result in the sterilization of your dog. He will no longer be able to reproduce, so if you



intend to breed your animal, do not have him neutered.

- Neutering changes his appearance.

Your dog will look different because his testicles will no longer be present. If the absence of these organs is a cosmetic problem for you, discuss testicular implants with your veterinarian.

- Neutering may cause weight gain.

Some pets gain weight after neutering. Cutting back on his food or increasing his activity can help reduce the weight gain.

Last year about 17 million dogs and cats were turned over to animal shelters. Only one out of every 10 taken in to the shelters found a home. This means that over 13.5 million had to be destroyed. The tragedy is that this is unnecessary. Much of the problem could be eliminated by simple surgery: Spaying and neutering operations are performed under general anesthesia and are quite painless. By neutering pets, owners can help lower the numbers of unwanted and homeless creatures.