



It is a sad truth that the number of puppies born every year is far greater than the number of good homes that can be found for them. As a result, thousands of healthy animals are destroyed and many unwanted dogs are left to fend for themselves. Having your dog neutered will not only help to reduce these numbers, it is also one of the simplest, safest and most practical ways of safeguarding your dog's health and welfare.

What does neutering involve?

Both castration in the male dog and spaying in the female are major operations which need a general anaesthetic. Your dog must be fasted overnight before the operation to reduce the risk of problems on the operating table. Castrating male dogs is a relatively straightforward operation and there is very little chance of anything going wrong. Spaying bitches is more difficult but it is one of the operations most frequently carried out by vets and any experienced vet will have done it many hundreds of times.

In the male the operation involves a single cut into the scrotum of the male dog to take out the testicles. Your dog should be ready to come home on the same day as surgery, as soon as the anaesthetic has worn off. If there are any complications, your vet might keep your dog overnight to keep an eye on them.

What are the benefits of neutering?

- **Females** - spaying will stop the bleeding that occurs with every heat cycle and prevent any changes in behaviour associated with heat cycle. Females that are not spayed, but who do not have puppies, may develop false pregnancy or infection in the womb. Early spaying of females reduces the risk of them developing mammary cancer (breast cancer) later in life.
- **Males** - some male dogs develop antisocial behaviour when they reach maturity. This may be in the form of aggressive or sexual behaviour - mounting other dogs or people!! Uncastrated dogs, if left to their own devices, may patrol a wide area in search of a mate and can detect a female in season a long way away. A dog who wanders is far more likely to be involved in a car accident. Castrating male dogs also reduces the risk of them developing diseases of the prostate in later life.

When should my dog be neutered?

Traditionally, female and male dogs have usually been neutered at about six months old. Before the development of safe anaesthetics and surgical methods, it was believed that a nearly fully grown animal would cope better with the operation. However, increasing numbers of vets now like to neuter animals earlier than this. There is no evidence that such early neutering harms a dog's later health and physical development. Female dogs are often neutered before their first season. However, if your dog has had a season most vets recommend waiting for 2-4 months after a season (in a mid-cycle phase) before performing the operation. Your vet will be happy to discuss with you the best time for neutering your dog.

Is it ever too late to neuter a dog?

There is no upper age limit for neutering your dog. You may wish to have your dog neutered if you acquire it as an adult, or you may want to have a litter or two before your dog is retired as a breeding animal. Male dogs can also be castrated later in life and this may reduce certain types of antisocial behaviour. But the older the male is, the more likely that it will carry on showing the less desirable behaviour traits such as aggression or mounting. If older male dogs develop prostate problems, castration may be recommended as the treatment.

Is neutering dangerous?

All operations requiring a general anaesthetic involve a certain amount of risk and, on rare occasions, there may be complications after the operation. Some known complications of the operation are excessive bleeding during the operation and problems with the wound site afterwards. It is important that your dog does not lick or nibble at the wound site. If you are concerned about your dog after the operation, contact your vet immediately.

Will neutering make my dog fat?

Neutering will not have any significant effect on your dog's lifestyle apart from eliminating its sexual



behaviour. Most owners find that any changes in their dog's personality are for the better as many neutered dogs are more affectionate. When dogs have been neutered their energy requirements tend to be lower. It is important to pay careful attention to your dog's weight in the months after neutering and if necessary to adjust their dietary intake to avoid weight gain.

Should I let my dog have just one litter?

It is an old wives' tale that a dog needs to have a litter of puppies. What your dog doesn't know she won't miss and neutering will save you the trouble and anxiety of finding good homes for the puppies.

Is neutering expensive?

Different vets will charge different prices for neutering, costs may vary according to the location of the practice and the quality of the facilities there. If you are concerned about the cost of neutering talk to your vet. On the whole all vets want to see as few unwanted puppies as possible and will try to minimise their charges. People on low or fixed incomes may be able to get help with the costs of the procedure from one of the animal shelters.

If you want any other information on health issues concerning your dog please contact Feldon Veterinary Centre on 01926 423161 and we will be happy to advise you.