

NEUTERING YOUR DOG

Why should I have my dog neutered?

The medical term for neutering the male dog is castration. During that procedure, the testicles are removed. Remember that Dogs for the Blind, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, and Dogs for the Disabled are routinely neutered.

What are the advantages of neutering my male dog?



- The obvious – preventing unwanted puppies, when they are killed by the millions in shelters in the US every year. Puppies are harder to sell than you might think. Many times, you can't find good homes even if you give them away.
- Reduces the risk of prostatitis
- Reduces the risk of hormone-related diseases such as perianal adenoma
- Eliminates the risk of testicular cancer, the second most common cancer in intact dogs
- Removal of sexual urges, which usually decreases roaming behaviors
- Reduction of certain types of aggression, roaming, inappropriate mounting, and problems with urine marking.

Is neutering performed for any other reason?

The operation may be performed to treat testicular tumors and some prostate gland conditions. It is also used to control hormonal (testosterone) dependent diseases such as perianal tumors or perineal hernias.

What are the disadvantages?

Obesity is probably the most commonly quoted disadvantage of neutering. There is no question that the metabolic rate is decreased after neutering, a neutered dog tends to need fewer calories each day than an intact male dog. Obesity is the result of overfeeding and not exercising enough. By regulating your dog's diet and caloric intake, you can prevent obesity in neutered or intact males.

Neutering doesn't cause a change in personality, guarding instincts, intelligence, playfulness or affection. Dogs neutered at a younger age do tend to look different than those allowed to reach sexual maturity prior to neutering – those neutered younger are taller and more slender in appearance.

When should the operation be performed?

Most veterinarians recommend neutering at around six months of age. However, recent studies show that there may be benefits to waiting longer. Small dogs tend to do fine when neutered at less than six months of age. But large and giant breed dogs neutered at less than one year of age are at increased risk for problems such as hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia and ruptured ligaments in the knees.

Cancer is a mixed bag. One study shows that male Rottweilers neutered at less than one year of age have increased rates of lymphoma and bone cancer. Bladder cancer is more common in neutered dogs as compared to intact males. Prostate cancer and mast cell tumors are mildly increased in neutered dogs than male intact dogs. Melanoma, infectious diseases, trauma and dog fights are more likely in intact dogs compared to neutered dogs.

Despite some problems being more common in either neutered dogs or male dogs, several studies show that when all is considered, neutered male dogs live 18% longer (nearly 2 years) than intact male dogs. Male Rottweilers neutered after 3.5 years of age live longer than those neutered younger or not neutered at all.

Is there any alternative to surgery?

There have been recent advances in non-surgical neutering. These involve injection of a compound directly into the testicle. Significant inflammation can result, and objectionable testosterone related behaviors are not corrected. You should discuss this treatment with your veterinarian to determine if it is appropriate for your pet.

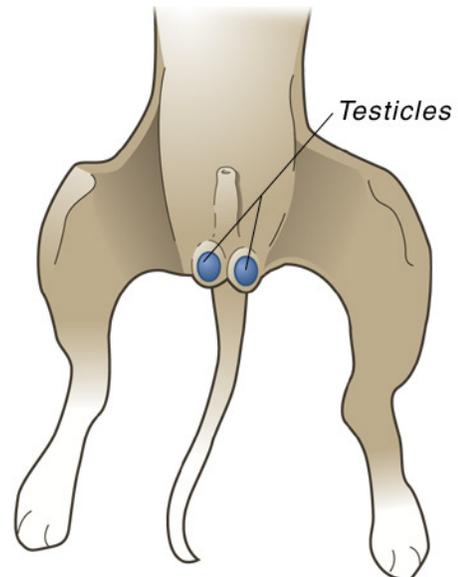
Are there any dangers associated with the operation?

Neutering is considered a major operation and requires general anesthesia. With modern anesthetics and monitoring equipment, the risk of a complication is very low. With modern anesthetics and monitoring equipment, the risk of a complication is very low. Minor complications occur at a rate of 3-5% and major complications at a rate of 0.3-0.5%. Death due to spay is not impossible, but it is extremely rare. It has been said that your pet has a greater chance of being injured in a car wreck than having an anesthetic or surgical complication.

What happens when my dog undergoes this procedure?

Make sure you take up all food after dinner time the night before surgery. There is no need to withhold water – we will take up the water when you bring your dog in on the morning of surgery, prior to 9am.

Your pet will be examined by your veterinarian and pre-anesthetic blood tests will usually be performed. If everything is acceptable, your pet will then be anesthetized. After your pet is anesthetized, a breathing tube will be placed in her windpipe. This will allow the delivery of oxygen and the gas anesthetic directly into the lungs. The surgery consists of making a small incision just in front of the scrotum and removing the testicles. Many veterinarians use absorbable sutures to close so that you do not have to return to have them removed.



Your pet will need to stay indoors the night after surgery, in a place that is warm, dry and supervised. Many vets prefer to send patients home the evening after surgery, and others allow them to go home, if adequate after-care can be provided at home.

Are there any post-operative precautions I should take?

The evening after surgery, small amounts of water or ice cubes can be offered, as long as there is no vomiting. Nausea and vomiting for about 12 hours after anesthesia is not uncommon. Pain medication can be given as directed. The following morning, a small meal can be offered, and after that you can gradually return to normal feeding. Rest and restriction of activity are the primary post-operative care you should provide. Most dogs can resume normal activity five to ten days after surgery. Until then, leash walks, no running, swimming or climbing stairs and lots of rest are the rule. You will get more specific instructions when you take your dog home after surgery.

Older and larger dogs will occasionally have swelling after surgery. The scrotum is often swollen in the first few days after surgery, leading some people to wonder if the procedure was really performed. This can happen as long as a week after surgery, and is more likely if activity is not restricted. If the dog is immature at the time of neutering, the empty scrotum will flatten out as he grows. If he is mature at the time of neuter, the empty scrotum will remain as a flap of skin. Sometimes the incision is bruised. Most male dogs are eager to play by the day after surgery but, to keep the incision intact, it is best to restrict the dog from boisterous activity. If swelling becomes uncomfortable for your pet, please see your veterinarian for advice.

What if a Dog has Undescended Testicle(s)?

The medical term for an undescended testicle is “cryptorchidism.” “Crypt” means hidden, and “orchid” means testicle. Undescended testicles have an increased tendency to grow tumors. They may also twist on their stalks and cause life-threatening inflammation. For these reasons, neutering is recommended for all dogs with undescended testicles. This procedure is more complicated than a routine neuter; the missing testicle can be under the skin in the groin along the path it should have descended to the scrotum, or it may be inside the abdomen. Some exploration may be needed to find it, thus there is often an incision for each testicle. The retained testicle is usually under-developed and may be sterile. If there is one descended testicle it will be fertile, but since retaining a testicle is a hereditary trait, it is important that the male dog not be bred before he is neutered.

References:

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