



Maidstone Veterinary Clinic

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BITCH SPAY

An ovario-hysterectomy or spay, is the operation to desex the female by complete removal of the ovaries and the uterus thus rendering her unable to have heats or puppies.

The operation is best performed at around six months of age to avoid all heats and the possibility of unwanted pups. This also has the added advantage of almost totally guaranteeing that mammary cancer will not develop later in life. Spaying after two or more heats does not confer any protection against mammary cancer but is still beneficial as entire bitches become more susceptible to life threatening infections of the uterus (pyometra) due to continued heats.

For bitches on heat, it is advised not to spay until 10-12 weeks have passed since the last visible signs of being on heat. There is considerably more difficulty and risk in performing the spay close to the time of estrus, as well as a chance of the bitch entering into a false pregnancy if she is spayed before this time interval has passed. Costs for doing so are also increased, from 25% or more of the regular cost of the procedure, due to increased surgical time and difficulty.

COMMON CONCERNS RELATED TO SPAYING

- Contrary to common belief spaying does not alter a dog's personality as this develops over her first 2 to 3 years of life and is influenced more by training than by the reproductive organs.
- Allowing the bitch to have one litter holds no benefit for her and should only be undertaken where homes may be found for the puppies.
- Spaying results in a lowered metabolism so whilst spaying itself does not cause the bitch to become overweight, overfeeding (which often is the same amount fed pre-spay) post-spay will. You could even look on it as a cost-saving exercise as they often need 10% less food over their life to maintain their weight at a healthy level.
- Occasionally spayed bitches may develop mild urinary incontinence as they mature as a result of lowered levels of hormones. When this occurs it is usually easily managed with periodic low doses of replacement hormones.

SURGICAL PROCEDURE

Vaccinations need to be up to date.

Although commonly performed and regarded as routine, ovario-hysterectomy is major abdominal surgery, which is performed under general anaesthetic, in a fully equipped veterinary surgery. We do not spay whilst in season as there are bleeding tendencies and unwarranted surgical risk. The hospital stay is usually for the day which is necessary for the bitch to be monitored closely during recovery.

HOME CARE

You will be given detailed instructions pertaining to home care at the time of discharge from the hospital. In general post surgery the bitch must be kept sheltered and warm the first night and thereafter lead walked only for the first few days to avoid complications such as wound break down and inflammation. Although refusal to eat the night of the operation is common, bitches should be eating again by the next day and may be fed their usual diet.

NOTIFY THE CLINIC IF THE FOLLOWING OCCUR:

- Your pet persistently vomits, appears listless or depressed.
- Your pet is reluctant to eat.
- There appears to be swelling or discharge at the site of surgery or if your pet is pulling at the stitches.

STITCHES

Make arrangements to have your pets stitches removed in 10-14 days after surgery.

Your Animal Health Professional

DOG NEUTER

Dog neutering is an operation performed to desex the male dog by removal of the testicles and associated reproductive structures contained in the scrotal sack. Male dogs attain sexual maturity from approximately 9 months of age although neutering can be undertaken anytime from around 5-6 months of age.

Testosterone-driven behaviours such as leg mounting, barking, aggressiveness, roaming and urine marking are unlikely to become a major problem if neutering is performed before puberty. If neutering was done after these undesirable traits have developed it will often reduce their intensity. Neutering is also beneficial in that desexed dogs will be unable to father unwanted litters. It also prevents “old dog” disorders such as developing prostate enlargement and there is no chance at all of developing testicular cancer later in life.

COMMON CONCERNS RELATING TO NEUTERING

- Neutering will not alter a dog’s personality except for those traits developed under the influence of testosterone. The perceived change in personality post neutering is more likely to be the decreased drive to do the undesirable hormonal driven behaviours such as leg mounting.
- It should be noted that although neutering is often the best first step in managing these undesirable behaviours they may persist post neutering as they become learned traits intensified by, but no longer solely driven by testosterone alone.
- Neutering results in a lowered metabolism so whilst neutering itself does not cause the dog to become overweight, over feeding (which often is the same amount fed pre neuter) post neutering will. You could even look on it as a cost-saving exercise as they often need 10% less food over their life to maintain their weight at a healthy level.

SURGICAL PROCEDURE

The operation is performed under general anaesthetic. A small incision is made just in front of the scrotum and both testicles and associated structures removed leaving an empty scrotal sack. After a mild amount of swelling post operatively the empty sack will eventually shrivel up. The penis is not altered in any way by the surgery.

HOME CARE

You will be given detailed instructions pertaining to home care at the time of discharge from the hospital. In general post surgery the dog must be kept sheltered and warm the first night and thereafter lead walked only for the first few days to avoid complications such as wound break down and swelling of the scrotum. Offer a small meal and although refusal to eat the night of the operation is common, dogs should be eating again by the next day and may be fed their usual diet. Check the wound regularly if the dog will allow and notify the clinic if there is undue swelling or discharge from the wound.

Make arrangements to have your pets stitches removed in 10-14 days after the surgery.

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STITCHES