

General Practice Service  
Willows Information Sheets

## Neutering of dogs





## Male dogs

### Why castrate a male dog?

- Entire male dogs can have a tendency to roam and look for bitches on heat. This increases the risk of them becoming lost and/or involved in road traffic accidents.
- Some un-castrated male dogs develop aggressive behaviour towards other male dogs when they mature. Castration prevents or reduces this behaviour. Other forms of aggression are not reliably stopped by castration, however, and in these instances it may be necessary for the dog to be taken for a behavioural consultation.
- Entire male dogs can develop medical problems with their testicles or prostate. Castration can prevent or often cure such diseases.
- A number of un-castrated male dogs show hypersexual behaviour towards people or objects, which can be problematic for both the owner and the dog! This problem usually significantly reduces and may even disappear several weeks after castration.

### Are there any problems associated with castrating male dogs?

- There is a small risk associated with performing any operation under general anaesthesia - this is the case for every operative procedure.
- Castrated dogs generally need fewer calories, which means that there can be a tendency for them to put on weight. Being aware of this and feeding them with an eye on their waistline will prevent extra weight gain. There is no automatic increase in weight after castration, it all comes down to giving the correct amount of food for your dog's needs.

## How do I arrange to have my dog castrated?

The first step in having your dog castrated is to arrange an appointment. We may know your dog already because he has been to us for his vaccinations, in which case you may be able to just book an appointment for the operation. If we have not seen your dog before or if we have not seen him for a longer period of time, we will ask to see him for a normal appointment first to perform a general health check. This is done to make sure that he is healthy enough to undergo general anaesthesia and to ascertain that both testicles are sitting in their normal anatomical position.

## What happens next?

For the operation we will ask you to bring your dog to the surgery at about 7.45 am on the appointed day. It is very important that he is starved during the night before the surgery and that he has nothing at all to eat on that morning. If there is any food in the stomach, the anaesthetic risk is higher than usual, so this point cannot be overemphasised.

Initially your dog will be given a so-called premedication ('pre-med'), which contains a sedative and a strong pain killer. He will then be anaesthetised and the testicles will be removed.

The wound is usually closed with sutures that are not visible on the outside. After waking up, your dog can go home on the same day, usually in the afternoon. He may still be a bit 'light-headed', but should be fully awake. He can eat a small light meal and should just be allowed to rest.

We advise that you keep your dog quiet for about 10 days. Lead-walking is advised, and running or playing should be avoided as vigorous exercise can result in wound-healing problems. Furthermore, it is very important that he does not lick his wound as this could delay healing and cause infection. Most dogs leave well alone, but if necessary he may have to wear an Elizabethan collar to prevent damage to the wound.

It will take 10 days for the wound to heal fully and it is important that you monitor your dog well during that time. We will ask you to bring him for a postoperative check-up appointment 5 to 7 days after the operation. Should anything look unusual or should you be unsure about anything at all before or after the appointment, you should [contact us](#) for advice.



## Female Dogs

### Why spay a bitch?

- Bitches come on heat ('in season') about twice a year. The start of the season is usually made noticeable by a bloody discharge from the vulva which can last for 5 to 7 days. During, and especially straight after this period, bitches can be mated. They are very attractive to male dogs during that time and will actively search for males as well. Controlling a bitch on heat can be much more difficult than people think, so the danger of having a pregnant bitch and a litter of unwanted puppies is very real. Coping with the extra work and finding loving homes for all the puppies can be extremely demanding, especially for owners who are not used to this situation.
- In older bitches, hormonal problems not uncommonly lead to the development of an infected uterus (pyometra). Pyometra usually presents as an emergency and can be fatal if not treated promptly. The condition can be avoided by having a bitch spayed while she is young.
- Spaying bitches before maturity is reached (usually when they are 6 to 8 months old) will reduce the probability of malignant growths in their mammary glands ('breast cancer') later in life. If they are spayed after they have had one or more seasons, this added benefit no longer applies.

### Are there any problems associated with spaying bitches?

- There is a small risk associated with performing any operation under general anaesthesia - this is the case for every operative procedure.
- Spayed bitches generally need fewer calories, which means there can be a tendency for them to put on weight. Being aware of this and feeding them with an eye on their waistline will prevent extra weight gain. There is no automatic increase in weight after spaying, it all comes down to giving the correct amount of food for your dog's needs.
- Urinary incontinence (dribbling urine) is a problem that can develop in bitches whether or not they have been spayed, especially as they get older. However, spaying may increase the likelihood of incontinence problems developing, especially in bitches spayed before their first season. It is not a problem that we see on a very regular basis, but occasionally it can occur. In the majority of dogs cases the problem can be controlled with medication.
- Changes in coat quality have occasionally been observed in spayed bitches, especially in longhaired breeds. This is not something that we see on a regular basis but it can occur in individual dogs.

## How do I arrange to have my bitch spayed?

The first step in having your bitch spayed is to arrange an appointment. We may know your bitch already because she has been to us for her vaccinations, in which case you may be able to just book an appointment for the operation. If we have not seen her before or not seen her for a longer period of time, we will ask you to arrange a normal appointment first to perform a general health check. This is done to make sure that she is healthy enough to undergo general anaesthesia and an operation.

## What happens next?

For the operation we will ask you to bring your bitch to the surgery at about 7.45 am on the appointed day. It is very important that she is starved during the night before the surgery and that she has nothing at all to eat on that morning. If there is any food in the stomach, the anaesthetic risk is higher than usual, so this point cannot be overemphasised.

Initially your bitch will be given a so-called premedication ('pre-med'), which contains a sedative and a strong pain killer. She will then be anaesthetised and the uterus and ovaries will be removed through an

incision under the tummy. Afterwards the wound is closed, usually with sutures that are not visible on the outside. After waking up, your bitch can generally go home on the same day, usually in the afternoon. She may still be a bit 'light-headed', but should be fully awake. She can eat a small light meal and should just be allowed to rest.

We advise that you keep your bitch quiet for about 10 days. Lead-walking is advised and running or playing should be avoided, as vigorous exercise could result in wound healing problems. Furthermore, it is very important that she does not lick her wound as this could delay healing and cause infection. Most dogs leave well alone, but if necessary she may have to wear an Elizabethan collar to prevent damage to the wound.

It will take 10 days for the wounds to heal fully and it is important that you monitor your bitch well during that time. We will ask you to bring her for a postoperative check-up appointment 5 to 7 days after the operation. Should anything look unusual or should you be unsure about anything at all before or after the appointment, you should [contact us](#) for advice.

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