



## Neutering your Dog

The age at which dogs reach sexually maturity depends to a certain extent upon their sex and breed. Male dogs can become sexually mature from 5 months of age. Bitches usually have their first season between 6 and 12 months of age although toy breeds may come into season slightly earlier and giant breeds may have their first season as late as 18-24 months of age.

There is no defined age at which we would recommend neutering. It is done on a case by case basis. For example, if an adolescent male is developing behavioural problems, he can be castrated as early as 6 months of age. In bitches we recommend timing neutering to 3 months after the end of a season. This is to reduce the likelihood of a phantom pregnancy or her return to season. The younger a bitch is neutered the less likely she is to develop mammary masses later in life. Some bitches can be neutered prior to the first season, although this may not be appropriate for each case. These cases should be discussed with your vet.

The surgery is carried out under general anaesthetic. This is understandably a worry for some clients; however every step is taken by your vet to reduce any potential risks. Prior to any surgery we advise you bring your dog to the vet for a general health check. The night before surgery we recommend taking food away from midnight; however access to water should be maintained. When your dog is admitted for surgery, after a health check, they receive a premedication containing pain relief and a sedative. The general anaesthetic is given and a veterinary nurse will monitor the patient throughout the entire procedure whilst a vet performs the surgery. In the male a pre-scrotal incision is made and the testes removed. In the bitch the abdomen is entered and a complete ovariohysterectomy is performed. In both cases the incision is closed with either external or internal sutures.

Following surgery it is important to keep the patient as quiet as possible, this is especially important in the bitch. We will provide a buster collar or Pet T-Shirt to prevent your dog licking or interfering with the surgery site as post-operative infections can prolong the time taken to recover and therefore the overall costs of the procedure.

Recovery is usually surprisingly fast and most pet owners report a return to normal behaviour within 48 hours. This is especially true of castration in the male. It is not unusual however for the bitch to be slightly more painful.

Both male and female dogs can tend towards obesity following neutering especially in certain breeds. Therefore it is important to monitor weight gain and, should you be concerned, our qualified nursing team offer free weight clinics to give advice and discuss the options available.

For more information on dog neutering please contact us.