

Spaying or Neutering Your Dog

Canine Connections
www.k9-connections.com

Removing your dog's reproductive ability will not change the basic disposition and temperament of your dog. Neutering a male may make him more tolerant of other male dogs. Neither neutering nor spaying will by itself turn your dog into an obese or lazy pet. This is instead a result of excess food and inadequate exercise.

Some veterinarians prefer to spay or neuter at a relatively young age (four to six months). The age that your dog is spayed or neutered depends on its breed and will vary from dog to dog. The best age to spay or neuter your dog should be determined by your veterinarian.

Many reputable breeders sell their "pet quality" puppies with a verbal or written agreement that the dog will be spayed or neutered. These puppies are sold at a lower price than the "show prospect" puppies. Even though they have the same excellent pedigree and have received the same care and attention, the breeder has already determined in these cases that the puppy should not be used for breeding stock.

The Myths about Neutering

Myth: *"Dogs that are neutered cannot participate in A.K.C. events."*

Fact: The American Kennel Club permits neutered animals to participate in all phases of obedience, tracking and fieldwork, but not in confirmation shows. If you are interested in confirmation, consult with your breeder or an individual experienced with confirmation to determine if your dog is a confirmation candidate.

Myth: *"Once a dog is neutered, he will get fat."*

Fact: Weight gain is primarily a result of improper feeding and inadequate exercise.

Myth: *"The surgery is expensive and unnecessary."*

Fact: The surgery cost is low in comparison to the potential costs of health and behavior related issues that can arise from not neutering your dog. The total cost for the surgery typically depends upon the age and size of the dog. The cost of surgery includes hospitalization, general anesthesia, and medication and suture removal. Contact your veterinarian for more details regarding the cost of surgery.

Myth: *"My dog should breed at least once before I have him neutered "*

Fact: If you are thinking of using your male as a stud dog, you are just as responsible for the quality of the litter as is the owner of the dam (mother). You have the obligation of thoroughly screening every owner that makes an inquiry for stud services. This may include information about the bitch to be bred; traveling to and from to pick-up and return bitches sent to you for breeding, boarding and caring of the bitch while in your care; the actual breeding; supplying pedigrees, photos, health reports, and the keeping of accurate records. This is all done as the circumstances arise and not necessarily at your convenience. Once a male dog has sired a litter, you may notice an increase in attitude and possibly begin to experience behavioral problems. Among these is an increase in the urge to roam if they smell a bitch in season.

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Myth: *"Neutering my dog will change his personality."*

Fact: The only behavior changes that are observed after neutering relate to behaviors influenced by male hormones. Playfulness, friendliness, and socialization with humans are not changed. The behaviors that do change happen to be the far less desirable ones. The interest in roaming, aggressive behavior against other male dogs, urine marking, and inappropriate mounting are far less likely in neutered dogs.

Myth: *"My dog will not be as good of a protector of home and family if neutered."*

Fact: Many dogs have a natural instinct to be protective of their homes and owners. They are also much more inclined to stay near home when neutered. It is true that un-neutered dogs are often more likely to be aggressive and territorial (urine marking, fighting), but these traits should not be confused with loyalty and protection of their home and family. Providing a safe environment for your pet, proper health care, and proper training will be the most influential benefit to maintaining a happy pet that fits into your family.

Benefits of Neutering Your Dog

There are many advantages to neutering your dog:

- Neutering decreases penis-sheath discharge and floor spotting.
- Male hormones can also make a dog more likely to jump up on people and engage in dominance behavior. Neutering reduces this behavior as well as preventing a great deal of the urge to "roam."
- Intact males tend to be more overly protective and aggressive. Neutered males will not develop testicular cancer.
- Neutered males will not be stressed and upset by the scent of bitches in season, they will be less likely to show unnecessary aggression towards family and friends, and are less tempted to wander or be distracted from their work.
- Neutering causes the prostate to shrink into insignificance thus preventing both prostatitis as well as the uncomfortable benign hyperplasia (enlargement) that occurs with aging. The prostate gland under the influence of testosterone will gradually enlarge over the course of the dog's life. The prostate under the influence of testosterone is also predisposed to infection, which is almost impossible to clear up without neutering.
- Other health benefits of neutering include the prevention of certain types of hernias and tumors of the testicles and anus.

The Myths about Spaying

Many owners decide to have a litter of puppies before spaying their dog. Intent for this can be anywhere from a desire to make money to showing their children the birth process to the belief that all bitches should have at least one litter.

Myth: ***"Dogs that are spayed cannot participate in A.K. C. events."***

Fact: The American Kennel Club permits spayed animals to participate in all phases of obedience, tracking, and fieldwork but not in confirmation shows. If you are interested in confirmation consult with your breeder or an individual experienced with confirmation to determine if your dog is a confirmation candidate.

Myth: ***"Once a dog is spayed, she will get fat."***

Fact: Weight gain is primarily a result of improper feeding and inadequate exercise.

Myth: ***"The surgery is expensive and unnecessary."***

Fact: The surgery cost is low in comparison to the potential costs of health and behavior related issues that can arise from not spaying your dog. Not to mention the cost involved with an accidental or planned breeding. The total cost for the surgery typically depends upon the age and size of the dog. The cost of surgery includes hospitalization, general anesthesia, and medication and suture removal. Contact your veterinarian for more details regarding the cost of surgery.

Myth: ***"I can make money on a litter of puppies."***

Fact: While a litter of puppies may seem to be an easy way to make money, it can be potentially expensive. Puppies will need to be seen by the veterinarian after birth for a complete exam, vaccinations, and to possibly have dewclaws removed or tails docked. Additionally there may be unexpected medical expenses or the need for an emergency procedure, all of which can be potentially expensive.

Myth: ***"A litter of puppies will allow me to teach my children about the birth process."***

Fact: Having a litter of puppies can be an eye-opening experience to almost anyone; especially when you take all that is involved into consideration. The preparation and birthing process can be very time consuming and is expensive, especially if it your first attempt. If you are seriously considering breeding, check with your veterinarian or an experienced breeder to find out more about the responsibility and obligations of proper and safe breeding.

Myth: ***"My dog should have at least one litter before being spayed"***

Fact: It is not medically or behaviorally beneficial for a bitch to have one litter prior to being spayed. However, it can be detrimental to the bitch's behavior. After having a litter, the bitch may potentially become overly protective of her puppies. Even after the litter is gone, she may become toy, food, or bed/area possessive, which may cause problems in and outside of the home.

Facts about Breeding

If you are considering breeding your female dog there are several things that should be taken into consideration. In most instances a prospective breeder should work with an experienced breeder in determining if their dog is the proper representation of the breed and in proper condition (health) for reproduction. Prospective breeders should take into account the pedigree, temperament; breed standards, and overall health of the animal. The following guidelines should be considered in your evaluation:

- **Pedigree:** A four or five generation pedigree on the proposed litter should be researched and interpreted by a person with extensive knowledge of the breed and the dogs involved. Titles alone are no guarantee of genetic value. Pedigree research or consultation will also help prevent inexperienced breeders from accidentally inbreeding.
- **Temperament:** Dogs should be bred to a standard temperament, which will vary depending on the breed. The dog's behavior and that of the mother and father of the dog should be evaluated. Dogs that are overly aggressive, overly submissive, neurotic, or display undesirable genetic traits should not be considered.
- **Breed Standard:** The dog should be a perfect or a near perfect representation of the breed standard before it is allowed to reproduce. You should have your dog evaluated for his conformation by an expert, or even show in the conformation ring for evaluation.
- **Overall Health and Congenital Defects:** Any inheritable defects including, but not limited to: off color, undescended testicles, over/under shot jaw, congenital hearing defects, moderate to severe dysplasia, recurrent skin problems, thyroid deficiency, immunological problems, recurrent seizures or epilepsy occurring in either parent are all reasons not to breed regardless of other qualities.
- Additionally, a breeding animal must be fully mature, in the prime of health, and in lean muscular condition. All inoculations should be up to date and the animal should be free of both internal and external parasites. Acquired problems such as a narrow birth canal from previous injury, transmittable venereal disease, anemia, and any disease of infection of the reproductive organs, concurrent disease of other organ systems or any contagious disease are all reason not to breed.

Consider the Current Pet Population

The problem of unwanted dogs has reached overwhelming proportions. If at this point you are still considering breeding your dog, visit the dog shelter in the city nearest you. Ask how many dogs the shelter takes in and how many are destroyed each month.

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