

## Neutering your dog

### **When do puppies have their first season?**

Puberty in the female dog is variable, and usually between 6–14 months. Small breeds often reach puberty earlier than larger breeds. Puberty in males is considered to occur between 6 and 9 months of age. However, behavioural and social maturity may not be reached until between 12 and 24 months of age and is suspected to differ depending on the breed.

### **How often do dogs come into season?**

Most dogs go into season (are on heat) twice a year (approximately every 6 months). However, the interval can vary from dog to dog. Very large breeds may only go into heat once a year.



### **Neutering**

Neutering in females is called spaying and involves removing the ovaries and/or uterus from the reproductive tract (ovariectomy or ovariectomy). In males neutering involves removing both testes and the procedure is called castration.

Some of the benefits of neutering include:

### **Female dogs:**

- Prevents seasons.
- Prevents pregnancy.
- Prevents womb infections (pyometra).
- Prevents false pregnancies (pseudopregnancy).
- Reduces the chance of mammary cancer.

### **Male dogs:**

- Prevents testicular cancer.
- Reduces the chance of prostate problems such as Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) and certain prostatic tumours, later in life.
- Reduces the urge to seek out a female dog to mate with, and therefore reduces the urge to roam away from home. This in turn can reduce the risk of road traffic accidents.
- Reduces the chance of behaviours such as humping, scent marking.
- May reduce aggression towards other dogs.

### **When is the best time to have my dog neutered?**

At Claro Hill Vets, we recommend that most dogs can be neutered around 12 months old for optimum health benefits, but it depends on many factors including the breed.

Neutering dogs (especially males) under the age of 12 months, or before the dog has reached skeletal maturity, is no longer recommended. Testosterone and oestrogen play a key role in the closure of growth plates in dog's bones. Neutering early removes these hormones prematurely which can cause the bone to grow longer than normal, altering joint conformation and the biomechanics. This creates an increase in the incidence of injuries among dogs that have been neutered at a younger age, such as cruciate rupture. Traditional early neutering of male dogs has been linked to some cancers as well as an increased risk of joint disorders.

For small breed female dogs (<20kg), we recommend they can be spayed from 6 months old, but usually 3-4 months after their first season and ideally before their second season to have the lowest possible chance of getting mammary cancer.

For large breed female dogs (>20kg), we recommend they can be spayed from 12 months, this usually works out to be 3-4 months after their first or second season.



### Other factors involved in decision making

It is always important to discuss the timing with your vet, as the decision is based many other factors.

1. **Breed/size:** As mentioned above, if your dog is a large or giant breed, our vets will recommend neutering them slightly later to allow them to become skeletally mature.
2. **Behaviour:** Neutering can change a dog's behaviour either making better or worse. For this reason, if you are considering neutering your dog for a behavioural reason, always talk to one of our vets or nurses and/or a qualified animal behaviourist beforehand.
3. **Weight:** Overweight/underweight dogs are more at risk of complications during surgery, so it's best to get them into good shape before neutering. Dogs are also prone to weight gain after neutering so it is recommended to feed a "neutered dog" food which is calorie controlled or reduce their portion size.
4. **Seasons** (female dogs only): the ideal time to spay a female dog is 3-4 months post season.
5. **Other health conditions:** Certain health conditions may change your dog's ideal neutering time, for example, early neutering is not recommended in Dachshunds due to an

increased risk of intervertebral disc disease (IVDD). Please speak to us for more specific information.

### **What will happen when my dog is neutered?**

#### **Before:**

- **Food** – you will need to starve your dog for 6 hours before they go under anaesthetic, i.e. give them dinner the night before and ideally a late snack before bed, but no breakfast or treats on the morning of their operation. This is to make sure their stomach is empty, so they don't regurgitate and choke under anaesthetic.
- **Water** – you can leave water down for your dog until 2-3 hours before they go in for their operation, i.e. take it away at 6-7am the morning of their surgery.
- **Health** – if your dog has been poorly in the days leading up to their operation, please let the vet or nurse during the admit know so they can give them a check over and make sure they are fit for surgery. The procedure may have to be delayed if they are not 100%.
- **Cleanliness** – try to make sure your dog is clean when they go for their operation, and if they are very mucky give them a bath the night before.
- **Toileting** – please take your dog out to the toilet on the morning of their procedure.

#### **The operation:**

One of our vets or nurses will admit your dog at a specified time. They will go through the planned procedure, the potential risks and complications with you, and run through the consent form, which will include questions about their medication, food and any additional procedures that you wish to be done on the day (e.g. nail clipping and anal gland emptying).

We will check your dog over and listen to their heart, count their respiratory rate and check their temperature. Once they are admitted, we clip a patch on their leg for their intravenous (IV) cannula and put local anaesthetic cream on the skin which will numb the area. After an hour, we place a IV catheter and give them a light sedative (premedication), opioid pain relief and an anti-sickness medication to the bitches undergoing ovariohysterectomy (spay).



Once the sedative has taken effect, your dog will be put under general anaesthetic. They will then be carefully monitored by a registered nurse, while their surgical site is clipped and cleaned ready for the procedure. We then instill local anaesthetic under the skin where we will make our surgical incision.

If your dog is female, your vet will make a small incision along the middle of her abdomen so her ovaries and uterus (womb) can be carefully removed. If your dog is male, your vet will make a small incision just in front of the testicles so that both testicles can be removed via one incision. If your dog is cryptorchid (has one or two retained testicles), they are likely to need two incisions for their castration, either in the groin or in the abdomen depending on where the retained testicle is hiding!

Your dog will wake up from their anaesthetic under the careful watch of a vet nurse while they recover. Most dogs can return home a few hours after their operation, once we are happy that they are comfortable, warm, eating, up and about on their feet, and have been out to the toilet.

## Aftercare:

- **Rest.** When your dog first comes home, they might still be a bit sleepy and disorientated. This can last for several hours, but they will start to feel much more normal as the anaesthetic drugs leave their body (usually within 24 hours). Once your dog is feeling brighter and more energetic, it's likely that they will want to run around as normal, but it's important that they rest for 10-14 days to prevent any complications with the wound and internal stitches. You will need to keep your dog on a lead, crate them, or confine them to one room. Once they have recovered from being neutered, you can start slowly returning them to exercise.



- **Protecting the wound.** Your dog will need a product to stop them licking at the wound; there are three options, either a buster collar, inflatable collar or a medical pet shirt.
- **Check up.** We will usually recommend that your dog should have a check up 2-3 days and 10 days after their operation, to check they are healing well and getting back to normal

after their anaesthetic. However, if you have any concerns about your dog before their check up, you can always call us for advice.

**To book in for your pet in for a health check to discuss neutering, please call us on 01423 228080 or visit [www.clarohillvets.co.uk](http://www.clarohillvets.co.uk)**