

Henlow Veterinary Hospital

FEMALE DOG NEUTERING

WHY should I neuter my FEMALE Dog?

The decision whether or not to have your female dog neutered, or “spayed” can be daunting and there can be a lot of contradictory information available on the subject.

Here at Henlow Veterinary Centre (HVC) we recommend that female dogs are neutered from 6 months of age on health grounds and we base this recommendation on the best scientific evidence available.

There is some evidence that some breeds may benefit from delaying speying.

Please ask our vets and nurses about your dogs breed before booking in.



WHAT does having my DOG spayed entail?

The procedure involves removing your pet's ovaries, known as “ovariectomy” (OVE), under a general anaesthetic and this usually just requires your pet to be with us as a day patient.

In the UK it is more traditional to remove the ovaries and womb, (“ovariohysterectomy” or OVH), however here at HVC we prefer the OVE procedure as we believe it results in a quicker surgery with less damage to tissue. However, if during the surgery we find any abnormality of the womb, we will undertake a full OVH at no extra charge and it should be noted that this may be more likely in older pets.

Both OVE and OVH will result in your pet no longer coming into season or being able to have puppies and the OVE procedure confers the same health benefits as OVH.

We also recommend that your pet is protected against lungworm before her surgery and we suggest giving Nexgard Spectra or applying Advocate at least one month before the date of her surgery.

If you wait to neuter after your dog's 1st season, you need to wait 4 months from the start of her season, or 3 months from the end, to have surgery done.



WHAT are the health benefits of spaying my dog?

- Spaying your dog can reduce the chance of her developing mammary gland tumour (breast cancer), the most common type of malignant tumour in female dogs. This effect is directly associated with the timing of surgery, with the maximum protective effect achieved if your dog is spayed before her first season and it has been shown that this protective effect is reduced after the first season and with each subsequent season.
- Spaying your dog also eliminates the risk of your pet developing an infection of the womb ("pyometra"), a life-threatening condition that often requires emergency surgery when the patient is very ill. Pyometra is a very common condition and studies have shown that 1 in 4 unspayed female dogs will develop pyometra by the age of ten years old.
- OVE eliminates your pet's chances of developing ovarian cancer.
- Although pregnancy and whelping are natural processes, just as with humans, things can go wrong and can be dangerous for your pet. Many dogs need assisted births, which can result in large vet bills. Neutering eliminates the risk of accidental pregnancy and its associated health risks and costs. It also avoids the necessity of finding homes for puppies, when shelter charities already have to deal with too many unwanted dogs.

Are there any OTHER BENEFITS?

Unspayed dogs will come into heat which usually happens every 6 months. During this time she will be attractive to male dogs and will be pursued and harassed by them for up to 7-10 days. Neutering will prevent your pet coming into heat and the inconvenience and difficulties of keeping her separate from male dogs.

- Once a female dog has had a season, she will go on to produce pregnancy hormones, whether she has been mated or not. This can result in her showing signs of false pregnancy ("pseudo-pregnancy") about 8-9 weeks after her season which can include enlargement of her mammary glands, milk production and behaviour changes with nesting and sometimes aggression. Occasionally these signs can be severe and need veterinary treatment to resolve. Spaying will prevent your pet from developing pseudo-pregnancy.



Are there any down sides to spaying my dog?

There is an increased risk of developing urinary incontinence in spayed dogs. However, despite common belief, this risk is not increased if the dog is neutered before her first season, although there is possibly an increased risk in dogs spayed before 6 months of age. Urinary incontinence is usually a mild problem which is easily managed by medication.

It is also recognised that spayed dogs are more likely to become overweight, particularly in some breeds. It is a myth that once the weight is put on that it is much more difficult to lose than if she was not spayed and we recommend monitoring your pets' weight after she has been spayed and be prepared to reduce her food intake if necessary.

>>

Are there any down sides to spaying my dog?

The procedure requires that your pet undergoes a general anaesthetic, which always has inherent risks. At HVC we give all patients a thorough pre-anaesthetic examination to minimise the risk of a general anaesthetic, and only use fully qualified and trained veterinary nurses to assist during anaesthesia. We will also discuss with you the option to check a pre-anaesthetic blood sample to see if there are any specific underlying concerns which may affect the anaesthesia and we give your dog intravenous fluids to help her circulation during the operation.

If any of the above issues concern you, or you have heard anything elsewhere regarding neutering that you are worried may affect your pet, then please do not hesitate to book an appointment with one of our veterinary surgeons to discuss your concerns.

On the basis of current evidence, our veterinary team at HVC recommend female dogs are neutered between 6 months of age and their first season (or at the least they are neutered before two and a half years of age) to receive the maximum health benefits.

