



Neutering my Dog



PETVET clinics are well-equipped, full-service, small animal veterinary practices providing comprehensive diagnostic, medical, surgical and dental care. We aim to offer quality service, giving your pet the maximum opportunity to lead a long and happy life.

ALL THE CARE YOUR PET NEEDS!



How does neutering affect behaviour?

The only behaviours that will be affected by castration are those that are under the influence of male hormones. A dog's temperament, training, personality and ability to do "work" are a result of genetics and upbringing, not hormones. Castration does not "calm" an excitable dog, and unless a castrated male dog is overfed or under-exercised, there is no reason for it to become fat and lazy.

What is castration?

Castration or neutering of male dogs is surgical removal of the testicles. The procedure involves general anaesthesia. An incision is made just in front of the scrotal sac and both testicles are removed, leaving the sac intact.

Which behaviour problems can be expected to improve following castration?

Only those behaviours that are driven by male hormones, can be reduced or eliminated by castration. Although the hormones are gone from the system almost immediately following castration, male behaviours may diminish quickly over a few days or gradually over a few months.

Undesirable sexual behaviour

Attraction to female dogs, roaming, mounting, and masturbation can be reduced or eliminated by castration.

- For roaming there was moderate improvement in 70% of dogs with marked improvement in 40%. For mounting there was moderate improvement in 70% of dogs with marked improvement in 25%.
- In one study, castration led to reduced aggression toward other dogs in the house in 1/3 of cases, towards people in the family in 30% of cases, towards unfamiliar dogs in 20% of cases and towards unfamiliar people in 10% of cases.

Urine marking

Most adult male dogs lift their legs while urinating. Instead of emptying their bladders completely, most male dogs retain some urine to deposit on other vertical objects that they pass. Some males have such a strong desire to mark that they also mark indoors. Castration reduces marking in 80% of dogs with a marked improvement in 40%.

Aggression

Every aggressive dog should be neutered. At the very least this will prevent reproduction and passing on of any genetic traits for aggression. Castration may also reduce or eliminate some forms of aggression.

Are there any additional benefits to castration?

Medical benefits

Castration eliminates the possibility of testicular cancer and greatly reduces the chance of prostate disease, two extremely common and serious problems of older male dogs. Most older dogs will develop prostate disease or testicular tumours if they survive to an old enough age. Castration can also reduce the risk of perineal tumours and perineal hernias.

Population control

Perhaps the most important issue is that thousands of dogs are destroyed annually at animal shelters across New Zealand. Neutering males is as important as spaying females when it comes to population control.



Are there any risks?

There are risks with any surgical procedure but with modern anaesthetic agents and state of the art monitoring, it is extremely rare for there to be major anaesthetic or surgical complications during a canine castration.

Most young and healthy animals recover without incident. Often, the biggest concern is not the surgery and anaesthesia, but the recovery, since we need to ensure that the dog does not lick excessively at its incision line until it is fully healed. Constant monitoring, bitter tasting creams, or a protective Elizabethan collar, will be required if excessive licking is observed following castration.

When castration is being considered for an older dog, the benefits must be weighed against any risks associated with anaesthetic and surgery. Since castration surgery is seldom associated with any complications, it is the anaesthetic that is the primary concern. If the dog is exhibiting any undesirable behaviours like roaming, masturbation, mounting, inter-dog aggression, excessive sexual interest or marking, there may also be a significant benefit to be gained from castration.

If castration is being considered as a separate procedure for a medical reason such as prostatic enlargement, testicular tumours, perineal tumours or perineal hernias, there is a significant benefit to the dog's health, comfort and perhaps longevity, in having the castration performed.

A physical examination, blood and urine tests and additional investigations such as x-rays, ultrasound and cytology can help to determine the prognosis or if your pet has any significant anaesthetic risk. Sometimes castration can be performed with other procedures like growth removal or preventive dentistry.

What age is best for preventive castration?

Whether the pet is castrated post-puberty (*1 year or older*) or pre-puberty (*2 months to 9 months*) the behavioural effects are likely to be the same. Dogs that are sexually experienced are more likely to retain their sexual habits after castration, compared to those dogs that have had little or no sexual experience prior to castration. Many shelters begin neutering as young as 2 months of age. Castration is safe, and has no long term effects on health or behaviour, regardless of the age that it is performed. Once dogs are adopted into their new homes, most veterinarians recommend waiting until all vaccinations are complete before admitting the pet into the hospital for surgery. However, if general anaesthesia is needed prior to the vaccinations being completed for any other reason this would be an excellent time to consider castration.

My dog has retained testicles - what does this mean?

During foetal development or shortly after birth, the testicles will descend into the scrotal sac. In some dogs, likely due to a genetic predisposition, the testicles may not descend into the scrotal sac. These dogs are known as cryptorchids. The testicle may be retained in the abdomen or anywhere between the abdominal cavity and the scrotum. Retained testicles do not usually produce sperm, but they will produce hormones, which can lead to behavioural or medical problems. Retained testicles are prone to developing cancer later in life. Diagnosis of testicular cancer is extremely difficult if a testicle is located in the abdomen. All dogs with retained testicles should be neutered to eliminate the risk of testicular cancer later in life.

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