



Speying 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!








Desexing removes the sexual urge and ability to breed from both male and female dogs (bitches). Certain drugs can provide either temporary or semi-permanent control of fertility but surgical desexing is permanent.

What does Speying involve?

Speying involves the surgical removal of the ovaries and the uterus. Under a general anaesthetic an incision is made through the abdominal wall. The ovaries and uterus are located, the surrounding blood vessels are ligated (tied), the uterus is separated from the cervix, the cervix is sealed, the organs are removed and the abdomen closed.



What are the advantages?

If you do not intend to breed from your dog surgical desexing has undoubted advantages. Desexing the bitch prevents the production of hormones responsible for controlling oestrus (heat) and lactation (milk production).

-  **Behavioural changes associated with heat.** Heat is characterized by anatomical changes in the vulva. It swells and will produce a blood stained discharge. She will also produce pheromones to attract male dogs. Behavioural changes will make her accept a male for mating. Strict confinement is usually required to prevent mating but male dogs will still be able to detect her scent. Heat periods usually last for three weeks and occur twice a year. After speying she will not come into heat or become receptive to mating. She will not have to be confined and deprived of her usual exercise and companionship.
-  **Phantom pregnancy and lactation.** Occasionally after a heat period a bitch will appear pregnant although she did not mate. Many will show mammary gland development and may commence lactating (producing milk). This is called 'phantom pregnancy' or 'false pregnancy'. As all her reproductive tissues are removed at speying she will not be able to develop a 'phantom pregnancy', or lactate, or be able to fall pregnant.
-  **Pyometra.** As an entire bitch ages the the risk of abnormal effects of heat increase. She may develop a condition called pyometra. The lining of the uterus changes and a life threatening uterine infection can develop. Toxins from the infection enter the bloodstream and can ultimately produce widespread organ dysfunction. Aggressive and often expensive treatment with antibiotics, intravenous fluids and other drugs may be required to save her life. High risk surgery to remove the infected uterus is usually performed once the patient is stable. As the uterus is removed during elective speying the risk of pyometra later in life is eliminated.
-  **Mammary Tumours.** Many mammary tumours (breast cancers) are hormone sensitive. There is a significantly higher risk of mammary cancers in older, unspeyed bitches. The risk of mammary cancers increases with age. Best protection is provided by speying before the bitch is two years old.
-  **Hormone Associated Skin Disorders.** Some rare skin diseases caused by reproductive hormone imbalance may respond to speying.

What about disadvantages?

There are some disadvantages of speying. In general the disadvantages are minor and are outweighed by the advantages.

-  **Breeding.** Speying is a surgical procedure that cannot be reversed. You will be unable to breed your bitch once she has been spayed.
-  **Urinary Incontinence.** Urinary incontinence is the loss of bladder control, usually observed at night. Affected dogs will often have a wet bed or leave little puddles of urine after resting. Urinary incontinence has been recognized as a possible consequence of speying. It may develop either months, or usually years, after surgery. Dogs at risk of urinary incontinence may have episodes when they are stressed, when treated with some drugs such as cortisone, or if they develop infections in the urinary tract. Often treating the underlying cause will stop the incontinence. Unfortunately it is not possible to predict which dogs will develop this problem. If urinary incontinence persists medication can be given to control the problem. Some patients may be suitable for a surgical solutions such as colpo-suspension or urethral banding.



Common misconceptions

It is a common fallacy that a desexed dog will become fat and lazy. Remember that service animals such as Biosecurity Dogs, Guide Dogs, Hearing Dogs and Dogs for the Disabled are routinely desexed. Judicious feeding of a scientifically prepared complete diet without excessive tit-bits, combined with adequate exercise, will enable you bitch to maintain an ideal weight.

Another common fallacy is that the desexed dog loses character. Desexing may be performed as part of treatment for certain behavioural abnormalities. Bitches without behavioural problems may become more gentle but they will not lose their spirit or their intelligence. Any behaviour changes will be small.

There is a common misconception that a bitch should have at least one litter before spaying to improve her temperament and to ensure that she is mature. There is no scientific evidence to support this theory. Allowing her to have puppies will increase the risk of you having to deal with potential problems during the pregnancy and birthing process. The puppies will need your care feeding, worming, flea treatments and vaccinations before they go to new homes. It may also contribute to dog over population problems. As some breeds are prone to congenital disorders such as hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia or eye disorders, failure to screen for these diseases may result in legal disagreements with new owners. In general breeding should only be considered if you have the time, facilities and commitment to ensure the best possible outcome.

When is the best time to spey?

Desexing can be performed at any time, but the best time is usually before her first season. She should be settled in her new home, have completed her puppy vaccination course and be well socialized to people and other dogs. This will usually be between 5 and 12 months of age although the operation can be carried out at any time. The risk of complications from the operation increase if she is in season or pregnant. So it is best to plan surgery to avoid these situations if at all possible.

Your PETVET veterinarian will be more than happy to discuss the details with you. A good time to do this is during her puppy vaccination course or, for older bitches, at a pre-anaesthetic check.

CLINIC LOCATIONS

PETVET Lower Hutt
70 Pharazyn Street, Melling
Lower Hutt 5010

PETVET Silverstream
9 Kiln Street, Silverstream
Upper Hutt 5019
+64 4 5277552