

Neutering Advice for your Pet

DOGS

Female dogs can be spayed 6 – 8 weeks after finishing their first season. The advantages of spaying are: preventing unwanted pregnancy and reducing risk of breast cancer in later life to less than a 0.5% chance. Spaying earlier than this can (rarely) lead to problems in later life such as difficulties in controlling urination or infections around her vulva. Bitches can be spayed before their first season, however, the operation can be more complicated and take longer to do.

Ideally, a bitch should be spayed when she is young and fit, as this makes the surgery and recovery easier, but age is not a bar to surgery. Seasons in a bitch can be controlled chemically using Delvosteron injections but this should be avoided unless you want to delay a season for a specific reason (eg: you are going on holiday) or if you are unsure whether you wish to breed from her in the future. We recommend that all bitches who are not going to be used for breeding are spayed, as this avoids unwanted puppies, the nuisance of seasons, false pregnancies, womb infections and mammary tumours ('breast cancer').

Male dogs may be castrated from 6 months of age. This prevents testicular cancer and reduces the risk of prostatic problems in later life. It can also reduce boisterous and dominant behaviour, but this should be discussed with your vet first if it is your primary reason for castration.

If your dog is a larger breed, you should consider leaving the operation until they are fully grown. This can be around 12-18 months old. This applies to both male and female dogs but will differ depending on their breed. Neutering male dogs under the age of 12 months, or before the dog has reached skeletal maturity, is not advised. This is due to the increased length of time growth plates in the bones will take to fuse following the reduction in testosterone, increase likelihood of injuries among animals that have been neutered at a younger age.

CATS

Both male and female cats can be neutered from 6 months of age. This avoids unwanted pregnancies and can reduce wandering behaviour and fighting.

Uncastrated male cats tend to wander, fight and smell. They are very fertile and will be a source of unwanted kittens, so castrating your male cat is a socially responsible thing to do. However, castrating your male cat before 6 months of age can affect them later on in life as it stops the urethra (the tube between the bladder and the outside) from developing fully, leading to potentially fatal problems with blockages in later life.

Female cats can be spayed from 6 months of age. Female cats which are not neutered are the main source of unwanted kittens so spaying your cat from 6 months old before letting them out the house is best. It would not be a good idea to let your female cat out the house before neutering as they are very fertile from this age and are likely to come home pregnant.

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