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Neutering male dogs

What are the advantages of neutering male dogs?

The advantages include:

- Inability to cause pregnancy
- Reduction in roaming and chasing after bitches in season
- Possible improvement in attention to owner and reduced distractibility
- Reduced risk of aggression between two male dogs living in the same house (if the youngest dog is neutered prior to or close to puberty)
- Elimination of risk of testicular cancer (however, these cancers are not common and can usually be easily treated if they occur)
- Prevention of age-related prostate enlargement, reduced risk of prostate infections

What are the disadvantages of neutering males?

The disadvantages include:

- All anaesthetics and surgery carry some risk of complications

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- Dogs that are nervous or reactive may experience a worsening of their problems
- Increased risk of weight gain (preventable by reducing food intake)
- Increased risk of joint problems in later life (this seems to be mainly in large breed dogs, if they are neutered before puberty)
- Possible small increased risk of some uncommon cancers later in life (again, mainly in large breed dogs that are neutered before puberty).
- Small increase in the risk of prostate cancer

So should I neuter my male dog?

The British Veterinary Association has considered the pros and cons or neutering male and female dogs. Whilst they make a clear recommendation that female dogs are neutered, the situation for male dogs is less clear cut. In general, it seems that neutering of male dogs is not worthwhile for health reasons (the advantages are cancelled out by the disadvantages). This means that the main reasons for neutering male dogs are behavioural ones. In general, if a male dog has a tendency to stray; appears generally over-excited and unable to concentrate; or is engaging in unwanted sexual behaviour (humping furniture, urine marking indoors), there is a good chance that neutering will improve the situation. If a male dog has a tendency to be fearful of noises,

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people, or other dogs, neutering is likely to worsen this situation and should be avoided. For all behavioural problems, advice should be sought as early as possible from a APBC-registered or veterinary behaviourist. At Acorn House Veterinary Hospital all males booked in to be neutered receive a full examination and consultation so that the neutering decision can be tailor-made for your pet.

Dogs that have one or both testicles undescended should be neutered as retained testicles have a much increased risk of twisting or becoming cancerous.

When should I neuter my male dog?

Small breed dogs (expected adult weight of less than 15kg) can be neutered from 6 months of age.

Larger breeds (expected to be over 15kg) should wait until they are 12 months of age or older. This reduces the risk of some of the later life complications mentioned above. In giant breeds, delaying until 18 months or age may be recommended.

Exceptions include multi-dog households where it may be recommended to neuter a male dog prior to puberty; or for dogs that are urine marking indoors or causing themselves damage by humping constantly.

What does neutering involve?

Neutering males is also known as 'castration'. It involves removing both testicles.

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Dogs are given a premedication injection on arrival at the hospital. This makes them feel sleepy. They are then given a general anaesthetic and the fur in front of the scrotum is clipped away. An incision is made in front of the scrotum. Loops of suture material (surgical thread) are used to tie off the blood supply to each testicle. The testicles can then be removed. The skin is stitched back up. All dogs receive injections of three different types of pain relief at the time of surgery.

What are the risks of anaesthesia?

Studies have shown that the risk of death under anaesthesia in healthy dogs in the UK is approximately 1 in 2000. This risk is higher than for people undergoing anaesthesia.

Anaesthetic risks are minimised by careful management and monitoring of the patient's temperature, heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure, carbon dioxide levels and reflexes throughout the procedure. Every anaesthetised patient at Acorn House has an intravenous cannula placed before anaesthesia (small tube into the vein on a front leg) and a tube placed into the windpipe as soon as they are asleep. This means that the veterinary team can give intravenous fluids (a drip) and oxygen throughout the anaesthetic and medication can be given straight into the blood stream in case of any complications.

What are the risks of castration surgery?

Specific surgical complications that have been reported include:

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- Bleeding. The testicles are supplied by blood vessels, which need to be tied off before the testicles can be removed. If the ties slip after surgery, bleeding can occur. This is a problem that is mostly seen in the first 12 hours after surgery. If this complication happens, it may be necessary to go back and tie a new tie around that vessel.
- Reaction of the body to the suture material internally (where the vessels are tied off) or under the skin. Fluid may be produced by the irritated tissues, so there may be a clear or pink discharge from the wound. In most cases, this will settle on its own over time as the suture material dissolves, but in exceptional cases it may be necessary to repeat the surgery and replace the suture material with an alternative.
- Interference with the wound. If dogs run and jump whilst the wound is healing, or lick at their wounds, there is a risk of the wound opening up of becoming infected.
- Swelling of the scrotum. The scrotum is not usually removed, and it is normal for it to swell a little after surgery (it may look as if the testicles have not been removed at all). Over time the swelling will go down and the scrotum will shrivel up. However, in dogs that have a very pendulous scrotum, the swelling may be dramatic and uncomfortable. The veterinary surgeon may recommend removal of the scrotum in these cases.

How does Acorn House minimise the risk for my dog?

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- The senior veterinary and nursing teams at Acorn House have additional qualifications and experience in medicine, critical care and surgery and have developed anaesthetic and surgical protocols to ensure that every pet that is neutered at Acorn House will receive the same high standard of care.
- Dogs that have been neutered are kept at the hospital until the end of the day. This ensures that they can be monitored for early signs of any problems, and are rested during this critical period of recovery.

Aftercare

Dogs usually go home the day of their operation. Dogs have check-ups at the surgery 2 and 10 days after the operation.

A buster collar is provided free of charge, to prevent dogs from licking at their wounds. Some clients prefer to purchase a medical bodysuit instead. These are available from Reception of our nursing team.

Most dogs go home with a liquid anti-inflammatory painkiller, to be taken for 3-5 days after surgery. It is important to follow the instructions carefully - the medication should be given once daily, in food.

Dogs need to be prevented from running and jumping. This usually means keeping dogs on a lead, even in the garden. Dogs should not be walked for the few days following surgery, and lead

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walks should be restricted to 5-10 minutes twice daily thereafter, until the veterinary surgeon advises otherwise.

What are the alternatives to surgical castration?

Sometimes owners decide that they would like their dog to be castrated, but do not want him to have an anaesthetic or operation. Sometimes owners are not sure whether castration will make their dog's behaviour better or worse, so would like to try a temporary castration before committing to surgery. Sometimes clients do not want to breed from their dog now, but would like to keep the option open for the future. In all of these situations, the best option is likely to be a temporary hormonal implant. This is injected into the scruff of the neck in a routine appointment, a bit like a microchip. The implant switches off the dog's hormones and within 2 weeks of the implant, the dog will be considered to be "chemically castrated". The effects last approximately 6 months.

After this time, the implant will have been used up and owners can decide whether to continue with implants every 6 months, go ahead with surgical castration, or whether they now do not feel that castration is needed.

A consultation fee and implant costs in the region of £196. The size of implant is not affected by the size of the dog.

if you would like your dog to have the implant, please make a standard appointment with the vet. There is no need to starve your pet prior to this.

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If you would like your dog to have the surgical castration, please ring reception to book in an admit slot with the vet, and an anaesthetic and theatre slot for the surgery. The cost of the anaesthetic, castration surgery and post operative checks ranges from £288-467

, depending on the weight of the dog.

Surgical castration is usually recommended for dogs with retained testicles, and the exact surgery, timing and cost will depend on where the testicle has been retained - please speak to your vet if you believe that your pet does not have two normal, descended testicles.

How much is this going to cost?

Dogs weighing under 10kg	£288
Dogs weighing between 10-25kg	£330
Dogs weighing between 25-40kg	£381
Dogs weighing between 40-60kg	£425
Dogs weighing over 60kg	£467
Brachycephalic breeds have an additional fee added to the weight bracket listed above. These breeds require additional treatment and monitoring before, during and after anaesthesia and surgery.	£83

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This is based on standard care with minimal complexity or complications. Prices for any treatments or surgeries may be adjusted upwards in more complex or complicated cases.

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