Guide to Neutering - Male Dogs

What is neutering?

Neutering (or castration) is an operation to prevent your dog from breeding. It involves removal of the dog's testicles and is an irreversible operation.

Why should I neuter my dog?

Unless you're planning on breeding from your dog, then the responsible choice is to neuter.

Health - Prostate problems and testicular tumours are common diseases affecting older un-neutered dogs. They are preventable or treatable by castration.

Behaviour - Castration is never a quick fix for a poorly behaved dog. Aggressive dogs in particular are rarely “cured” by castration, although castration is often an aid to re-training such dogs. Only behaviour that is driven purely by male hormones will be affected by castration, for example roaming or “humping”. Un-neutered dogs will try their utmost to find a female dog to mate with, they might escape from the garden or slip their lead on walks, risking becoming lost or involved in road accidents.

Population control - There are well over 100,000 unwanted dogs filling Britain's rehoming centres. If your dog was to escape from the garden and mate with the neighbour's dog, you could be responsible for adding to that number (not to mention having to deal with the angry neighbour knocking on your door!)

When should I neuter my dog?

Male dogs can be castrated at any age. We normally recommend waiting until they are fully mature, around 9-12 months of age. A lot of owners will wait until their dog is cocking their leg to wee as an indicator. Some giant breed dogs eg great danes should wait slightly longer because they mature more slowly than average sized dogs. If castration is carried out later in life, the effect on behaviour is often much less noticeable, dogs are kind of ”hard wired” by that point and behaviour patterns are set. We would still recommend castration for health reasons even in geriatric dogs.

Will my dog gain weight?

Yes...if you feed him excessively. After castration your dog’s metabolism will slow down. Their energy requirements decrease by about a third, so if you continue to feed them the same amount of food as they had pre-neutering they will gain weight. Just feed the correct amount (you could switch to a "light" dog food) and exercise them. We have a post neutering clinic, where any problems such as weight gain can be discussed.
Will it change him?

Hopefully only for the better. We see very little difference in the character between un-neutered and neutered male dogs. Some owners are concerned that their dog has become lazy following castration, it is true that some dogs slow down a bit, but they would probably do this anyway as they mature.

Is it fair on him?

To be completely honest most dogs hardly even notice they've been castrated. We'd argue it's unfair to walk your dog around the park surround by beautiful female dogs, his hormones are raging, but he's never allowed to act on those feelings!

He's only got one testicle, is this a problem?

In puppies the testicles travel from inside the abdomen, ending up in the scrotum. The testicles have normally "dropped" by the time puppies come in for their second vaccination, sometimes it does take slightly longer. Occasionally one or both of the testicles gets stuck on its journey to the scrotum, either inside the abdomen or in the dog's groin area. We call these dogs “monorchid” or “cryptorchid”. It's even more important to get these dogs castrated than it is for normal dogs. A retained testicle is likely to develop into a tumour (cancer) later in life. The operation to castrate cryptorchid dogs is often a bit more complicated than a routine castration, as a result it’s normally a little more expensive.

What should I expect on the day?

Castration is a procedure that requires a general anaesthetic. We ask you to starve your dog from the night before the procedure, this reduces the risk of your dog vomiting under anaesthetic. You do not need to withhold water, but do not offer any other liquids such as milk or a nice cup of tea! Your dog will need to be left with us for the day. We open from 8.30am, so normally any time between 8.30am and 9.00am is fine. If you have somewhere urgent to be after dropping the dog off, please let us know so we don't keep you waiting. Your dog will be given a health check and admitted by one of our nurses or vets. We then give a pre-anaesthetic injection containing a mild sedative and pain relief.

Your dog will have a small wound just in front of his scrotum, through which we remove both testicles. The stitches we use are hidden under the skin and are dissolvable. We will have clipped an area of fur around the wound to ensure the area is clean for surgery. We do not remove the scrotum, which often fills with fluid after the procedure, over time the scrotum will shrink down flat.
Most dogs are ready to go home between 3 and 4pm, but can stay later if this is more convenient. Most dogs are quite sleepy when they get home and we recommend feeding a bland meal such as chicken and rice, or we have specially formulated tinned food available from reception. Some dogs may have a slightly sore throat for a few days following the operation because of the tube that is placed in their wind pipe during the anaesthetic. Occasionally some dogs will have a mild tummy upset.

The majority of dogs are up and about the following day and actually it’s often more of a job keeping them calm and rested than it is worrying about a prolonged recovery. It is essential that your dog is rested for at least 7 days following his operation. If your dog is allowed to run about, jump on the bed, chase the cat etc there is a risk his wound will swell, his stitches will pull through and his wound will open and become infected. We like to check your dog 5 days after surgery, to make sure everything is well and his wound looks good. But it is important to realise the wound will take about 10 days to fully heal. It is very important not to let your dog lick his wound. His saliva is not antiseptic, think about it, dogs go around licking their bums all day! Most dogs do not need to wear a cone to prevent licking, but we do have them available if needs be, alternatively we have medical t-shirts to cover the wound.

The effects of castration often take several weeks to be seen, it takes time for his hormones to rebalance. It is important to realise that dogs can actually remain fertile for about a month or so after castration, so must be kept separate from any un-neutered female dogs in season.

If you have any other questions regarding castration or would like to book your dog in for the procedure please contact us on 01527 831 616