



PET ADVICE – NEUTERING MALE DOGS

It is advisable to consider castration of any dog that is not going to be used for breeding. There are many advantages to having been neutered other than just preventing unwanted pregnancies. However, castrating as a 'cure all' for boisterous or even aggressive behaviour is not always as successful as may be desired. Behaviour is influenced by many factors, not all of which are hormone related. Some behaviour traits become 'imprinted and habitual' and can remain even after the removal of hormones. However, if castration is going to be successful in controlling behavioural problems the younger it is carried out the greater the likelihood of achieving this.

Other than for breeding, there is no medical need for a dog to remain entire, and in fact they may become more agitated and frustrated if left so, particularly if the neighbourhood is home to un-spayed bitches. Many male dogs can be agitated and inappetent for the whole duration of a bitch's season, which is three weeks.

Male hormones can be responsible for medical problems later in life, which may be preventable if the dog is castrated:

- Dogs can suffer from testicular tumours requiring castration at an older age. If the testicles have already been removed, this condition cannot occur.
- Dogs can suffer from prostate disease as they get older. The prostate gland lies at the neck of the bladder and if it increases in size it can result in difficulty urinating and defecating. The majority of causes of prostate enlargement are hormone dependent and therefore occur very rarely if dogs are neutered at a young age.
- Dogs can suffer from hormone dependent adenomata (lumps) around the anus and tail base as they get older and again, are rare in dogs neutered at a young age.

Ideally, unless other reasons prevail, it is best to let the dog reach maturity before he is castrated. The operation can be performed any time after six months of age, but with larger dogs it may be advantageous to wait until they are approximately one year old.

It is unusual for there to be dramatic change in the dog's nature after they have been castrated, except hopefully to eliminate some of the more unpleasant aspects of their behaviour. Neutered dogs make great family pets and the only disadvantage is the surgery itself. Their metabolism may become more efficient once the hormone levels reduce, so dietary modification may be required to avoid weight gain.

