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Neutering in Dogs

What is neutering?

Neutering (also known as castration) is the common term used to describe the surgical procedure during which both testicles are removed to sterilize (make infertile) a male dog, therefore stopping its ability to reproduce.

Why should I have my dog neutered?

Neutering should be considered if you are keeping any male dog as a pet. Shelters are overwhelmed with unwanted dogs. Reducing this overpopulation problem starts with spaying and neutering our dogs.

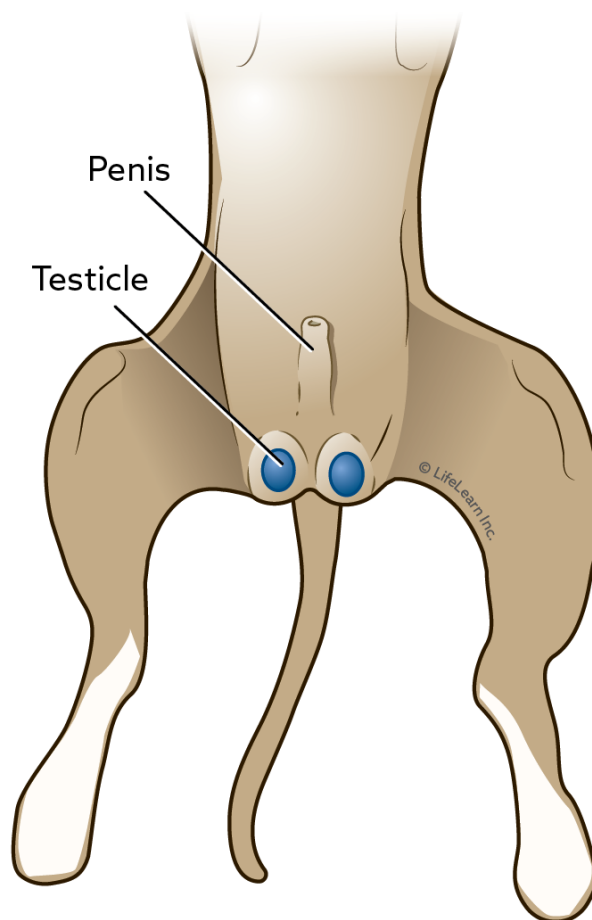
Remember that Guide Dogs for the Blind, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, Dogs for the Disabled, and police dogs are routinely neutered, and this does not impair their ability to perform their duties.

Neutering has many advantages for the long-term health of your dog, including:

- reduces the risk of benign prostatic hyperplasia (enlarged prostate that comes with age) and prostatitis (prostate infection)
- reduces the risk of hormone-related diseases such as perianal adenoma (benign tumor around the anus) and perianal hernias
- eliminates the risk of testicular cancer, the second most common cancer in intact (unneutered) dogs
- removes hormonal behaviors such as mounting and marking
- reduces certain types of aggression
- reduces the likelihood of separation anxiety or fearful elimination
- reduces the likelihood of roaming, which can result in motor vehicle accidents or other traumas
- neutered dogs generally live longer lives than unneutered dogs

Is neutering done for any other reason?

Neutering may be used in an attempt to treat certain forms of aggression, such as inter-male aggression. In older dogs, the operation may be performed to treat testicular tumors and some prostate gland conditions. It is also used to control hormonal (testosterone-dependent) diseases such as perianal adenomas.



What are the potential disadvantages of neutering?

The consensus at this time is that neutering will increase the lifespan of a dog. Some scientific studies have suggested increased risks of certain health conditions. Potential disadvantages to neutering can include the following:

- Neutering a dog will reduce his metabolism; however, obesity is the result of overfeeding and lack of physical activity. By regulating your dog's diet and caloric intake and ensuring regular (at least daily) exercise, you can prevent obesity in neutered or intact males.
- Neutering large-breed dogs before bone growth is complete has been associated with an increased risk of cruciate ligament tear (knee injury).
- Neutering before maturity may be associated with increased risk of certain fearful behaviors, such as noise phobia.

Despite these studies, neutering is considered the best option for the overall health and longevity of your dog. Neutering does not cause a change in personality, guarding instincts, intelligence, playfulness, or affection.

When should I have my dog neutered?

There are many factors to weigh when determining the optimal time to neuter a puppy, including breed, health, behavioral, and your pet's environment. Talk to your veterinarian to determine the best time to neuter your pet.

Is there any alternative to surgery?

Some facilities may offer vasectomies, which involve clamping of the spermatic cord so no sperm can be released. This procedure prevents unwanted pregnancies in female dogs, but all other risk factors of intact males remain. A sustained-release implant containing Deslorelin (brand name Suprelorin®) is available in some countries, but not currently approved in the United States. It causes temporary infertility. You should discuss with your veterinarian to determine if there are any new therapies appropriate for your dog.

What surgical complications could arise?

Complications are rare during castration surgery; however, as with all surgical procedures, there is always a small risk. Potential complications may include:

Anesthetic complications. Any cat can have an unexpected adverse reaction following the administration of any drug or anesthetic. Such cases are impossible to predict, but fortunately, are extremely rare. Protective measures can allow early detection and treatment of anesthetic complications should they arise (e.g., placing an IV catheter; monitoring of heart rate, blood pressure, oxygenation).

Another potential danger associated with anesthesia arises if the cat is not properly fasted prior to anesthesia. Anesthetized patients lose the normal reflex ability to swallow. During swallowing, the epiglottis, a cartilage flap at the entrance to the windpipe, closes and prevents food or water from entering the lungs. If there is food in the stomach, the cat could vomit while under anesthesia or in the early post-anesthetic period, allowing the food to enter the lungs and cause aspiration pneumonia, a potentially life-threatening condition.



Illness will increase the risks associated with anesthesia. Pre-operative blood work is a useful screening test that may detect pre-existing problems that could interfere with the pet's ability to handle anesthetic drugs. If there are any signs of illness including sneezing, eye discharge, vomiting, or diarrhea, the procedure should be postponed until your cat has recovered. To minimize the risks to your cat, it is essential that all pre-operative instructions are strictly followed and that you report any signs of illness to your veterinarian prior to an operation.

Post-operative infection. This may rarely occur internally or around the incision wound. In most cases, the infection can be controlled with antibiotics.

What happens when my dog undergoes this procedure?

Your pet will be examined by a veterinarian and pre-anesthetic blood tests will usually be performed. If everything is acceptable, your pet will be anesthetized. Most pets have an intravenous catheter placed to administer the anesthetic and to provide fluid therapy during the surgery. After your pet is anesthetized, a breathing tube will be placed in his trachea (windpipe) to deliver oxygen and gas anesthetic directly into the lungs.

During the surgery, both testicles are removed through small incisions in the scrotum (pouch of skin containing the testicles). Many veterinarians use absorbable internal sutures so you do not have to return to the hospital to have them removed, but your veterinarian may still recommend a followup visit to ensure your dog is healing appropriately.

Injectable pain medication and local anesthetic will be given during the procedure, and your dog will likely go home with several days of additional pain medication to ensure they stay comfortable.

Are there any post-operative precautions I should take?

Rest and restriction of activity are the primary post-operative care you should provide. Most dogs can resume normal activity five to ten days after surgery. Until then, leash walks, lots of rest, and no swimming, bathing, running, or climbing stairs is advised. Many veterinarians will recommend your pet wear a protective device such as an Elizabethan collar (E-collar) or alternatives to the E-collar to prevent your dog from being able to lick at his incision.

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