ISLAND VetCare

Neutering Advice BITCHES

AGE

Bitches can be spayed from 6 months of age if they are a small to medium breed, from 12 months of age if they are a large breed (e.g. Labrador) and from 18 months of age if they are a giant breed (e.g. Great Dane, Bernese mountain dog). Bitches can be booked 1 to 5 months after their last season has ended OR before their first season has started. If there are any signs of season i.e. swelling/discharge/signs of false pregnancy (behavioural changes/milk present) then the procedure will need to be cancelled and re-booked.

BITCH SPAY PRICE: (current Nov 2025)
< 25kg - £424.46 | > 25kg - £451.14

Please feel free to book an appointment if you would like to discuss these options further

REASONS FOR NEUTERING

- Prevention of unwanted litters.
- Prevention of unwanted oestrus (being in season) signs such as vaginal discharge (and false pregnancy).
- Prevention of pyometra (infection of the uterus) – there is a 25% incidence rate in entire bitches. It can sometimes be managed medically (although 20% will get a pyometra the following season), or more commonly surgically by removing the uterus.
- Prevention of uterine/vaginal neoplasia (i.e. cancer) – benign (non-cancerous) vaginal/uterine tumours are more common in neutered bitches (2% incidence) but entire bitches are more likely to have malignant tumours.
- More placid temperament. This is not guaranteed.
- Reduction in the incidence of mammary tumours.

DISADVANTAGES OF NEUTERING

- Weight gain - Dogs are twice as likely to become obese following neutering so please keep an eye on her weight, you may have to adjust her diet accordingly. This is due to their metabolism going down and their appetite going up. Obesity is associated with high morbidity and mortality rate.
- Although neutering can potentially lead to a more placid temperament, this might be disadvantageous in some working dogs.
- Any dog that is being neutered for behavioural reasons should have a full behavioural consultation assessment in order to work out if the dog is likely to respond to neutering in a way that you hope.
- There is some evidence that a number of bitches become more aggressive after neutering. There are many compounding factors such as breed, a possible reaction to pain at the time of the surgery and/or a stressful experience at the vets before and after surgery (though we try to keep this at the absolute minimum).
- Increased risk of urinary incontinence (Urinary Sphincter Mechanism Incontinence - USMI). Incidence is 4.5% within 3 years of being neutered though the larger the breed, the higher the incidence. There is also an increased risk in certain breeds such as Weimaraners, Dobermans and Boxers.

  Any bitch that is already showing signs of urinary incontinence such as nervous/exited urination, even if it is very occasional, should not be neutered and the incontinence should be investigated. Even if the incontinence improves after the first season the bitch might be at an increased risk of relapsing after being spayed.
- Possible hair coat changes – especially in red bitches.
- Uterine and vaginal neoplasia – benign (non-cancerous) vaginal/uterine tumours are more common in neutered bitches (2% incidence) but entire bitches are more likely to have malignant tumours. Spaying has also been linked to an increased risk of particular cancers such as transitional cell carcinomas (bladder cancer), osteosarcoma (bone cancer) and cardiac tumours.
- Growth rate/musculoskeletal issues – early neutering may cause a delay in the closure of growth plates (areas in the bones which allow the bone to grow longer) which may lead to issues such as a slight change in the biomechanics of stifles (knee joint). This can lead to an increased risk of cruciate disease.

RISKS/COMPLICATIONS OF SURGERY

- We pride ourselves on the degree of care we take to minimise adverse risks from the procedure. We use the best medical disposables, modern anaesthetic techniques and monitoring combined with minimal stress perioperative care. However, we can not eliminate risks entirely and so even though they are rare we have listed some of the potential risks below.
- Wound complications such licking or biting at the wound leading to the wound opening up or coming infected Haemorrhage bleeding or excessive bruising can occur but rarely becomes a serious issues.
- Ovarian remnants - Ovarian remnant syndrome occurs when signs of functional ovarian tissue occur in a previously spayed bitch. It is a condition in which the ovarian tissue is incompletely removed during the procedure. Bitches usually present with signs of oestrus: male attraction, vulval haemorrhagic secretions, vulval swelling.
- Stump pyometra - A true stump pyometra is an uncommon problem which refers to a hormone (progesterone) mediated infection of a remnant of the uterus. The term stump pyometra is often misused for a more common condition, a stump granuloma, which is focal inflammation of remnant uterine tissue, often caused by a reaction to suture material and which may or may not have bacterial infection at the same time.
- Ureteral injury ie. a ureter (the tube leading from the kidney to the bladder) becoming entrapped, again a very rare complication.
- Anaesthetic complications including drug reaction.
- Pain – some degree of discomfort can be expected and we try to eliminate this as much as possible (we usually use at least 4 different pain killing medications).

THE PROCEDURE

We offer ovariohysterectomy consisting of an incision into the abdomen with removal of both ovaries and the uterus, in some cases just the ovaries are removed. This is carried out through one incision on the midline of the abdomen.

ADMISSION PROCEDURE

Where possible, dogs will be given a pre-med (sedative) with you present to keep them as relaxed as possible. Therefore, their admit time will depend on when we expect to start the procedure which can be as late as 2pm on some days. With this in mind, please make sure you book the surgery on a day that you are available throughout for admission and collection. There is also a small chance that the admission time will change on the day if we have unexpected emergencies, but we will contact you with as much warning as possible if this is the case.

ON THE DAY

An intravenous catheter will need to be placed to allow us to induce the full general anaesthetic as well as allowing for emergency access. This will mean that a patch of fur on the front legs and/or back legs will need to be shaved to allow for this. The operation site will also need to be clipped generously to help to maintain sterility.

You can expect your pet to be with us for around 2 to 3 hours on the day of the procedure. She will be slightly sleepy when she comes home to you and we strongly recommend not walking her that day (post-operatively) other than for toileting purposes.

POST OP CARE

- One of the team will discuss all the discharge instructions with you fully on the day and you will also get a hard copy of these to take home.
- We recommend feeding a bland diet for dinner on the day of surgery, such as chicken/boiled rice/scrambled egg/a specific gastrointestinal diet.
- We usually recommend rest for 10-14 days. Walks are allowed during this, but she must be always kept on lead and not given any freedom to run, jump or play.
- You will be given some additional pain relief, usually to be started the day following the surgery. We will discuss this with you when you come to collect her.
- We don't usually need to see your pet back unless you have any concerns.

If you have any questions, our Nurse Team will be happy to discuss them with you. Please contact us on info@islandvetcare.co.uk or call (01983) 214747 and asked to speak with one of our nurses.