



**Bristol and District Branch**  
Registered charity number 205858

RSPCA Bristol Animal Clinic

## WHY NEUTER YOUR PET?

With dogs, cats and rabbits not to be used for breeding purposes **there are definite health and behavioural advantages to neutering both males and females at an early age.**

There are a lot of popular misconceptions surrounding the neutering of both cats and dogs and it is important that you, as an owner, are aware of the correct information.

### FEMALE DOGS

Neutering (spaying) should be encouraged for all female dogs not intended for breeding. The main reasons for this are to prevent the occurrence of the following problems:

- **Pyometra** - a potentially fatal infection of the uterus
- **False pregnancy** - a condition which usually requires veterinary treatment
- **Mammary cancer** - occurs later in life in unspayed bitches or those spayed after their second season. It is important from this point of view to get your bitch neutered before her second season
- **Seasons** - your bitch will come 'into season' once or twice yearly. This will attract male dogs, encourage your bitch to escape to seek male attention and result in her producing a bloody discharge for several days or so
- **Unwanted pregnancy**

Bitches **do not** need a litter prior to spaying – this is an old wives tale. Neither is the operation likely to affect their personality. A neutered animal does not need as much food as before, and overfeeding can lead to weight gain. However, this is easy to control with dietary manipulation and your veterinary practice will be able to give you advice if necessary.

Neutering your bitch involves removing both ovaries and part of the uterus under general anaesthesia. It is carried out from 3 months of age, except in a few breeds when we wait until 2-3 months after the 1<sup>st</sup> season.

## **MALE DOGS**

Neutering male dogs (castration) is beneficial in those not required for breeding in order to help prevent the following problems:

- **Testicular cancer** - some forms of which are malignant
- **Perineal hernias** - requires major reconstructive surgery
- **Prostate problems** - e.g. infection, benign enlargement and cysts
- **Perianal adenomas** - tumours around the anus that often require surgery
- **Behavioural problems** - e.g. aggression, roaming, urine marking, mounting behaviour

As with a bitch, castration is unlikely to affect your dog's personality and any potential increase in weight should be easy to control with the correct advice. Castration involves removal of both testicles under general anaesthesia and is not as long an operation as spaying a bitch. This can be carried out from 3 months of age.

## **FEMALE CATS**

Female cats (queens) should be kept indoors at all times until neutered from 3 months of age. Spaying your queen will prevent risk of pyometra (womb infection), reduce the risk of mammary cancer and stop your cat coming 'into season', which would attract unwanted attention from male cats. Surgery is under general anaesthesia and involves removal of both ovaries and the uterus. Every year veterinary practices and charity organisations are inundated with kittens from unwanted litters - the only way to prevent this is to spay your cat.

## **MALE CATS**

Male cats (toms) are also neutered from 3 months of age in order to reduce the risks of them spraying urine in the house and becoming aggressive to other cats. Entire male cats tend to roam over large areas with the result that they are more likely to become involved in cat fights or road traffic accidents. Cat castration is under general anaesthesia and both testicles are removed.

## **RABBITS**

Let's not forget about rabbits! Male and female rabbits are usually neutered from 3-4 months of age under general anaesthesia. In both cases it tends to make them easier to handle and less aggressive. Female rabbits can get pregnant as early as 16 weeks of age so it is important to get rabbits sexed when you get them and keep males and females separate until neutered. Around 70-80% of female rabbits over the age of four will develop uterine carcinoma (cancer of the womb) so it is of particular importance to spay females young.