



## **Canine Spay FAQ**

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## **Why All Female Dogs Should Be Spayed**

### **Mammary Cancer**

A female dog spayed before her first heat will have a near zero chance of developing mammary cancer. After the first heat, this incidence climbs to 7% and after the second heat the risk is 25% (one in four!). It is easy to see that an early spay can completely prevent what is frequently a very difficult and potentially fatal form of cancer.

But is it too late if a dog is already past her second heat? No, in fact spaying is important even in female dogs that already have obvious tumors. This is because many mammary tumors are stimulated by estrogens; removing the ovaries, the source of estrogens, will help retard tumor spread.

Spaying removes both the uterus and both ovaries and is crucial in the prevention as well as the treatment of mammary cancer.

### **Simple Convenience**

The female dog comes into heat every 8 months or so. There is a bloody vaginal discharge and attraction of local male dogs. Often there is an offensive odor. All of this disappears with spaying.

### **What Is Pyometra?**

Pyometra is the life-threatening infection of the uterus, which generally occurs in middle-aged to older female dogs in the six weeks following heat. The hormone progesterone, which primes the uterus for potential pregnancy, does so by causing proliferation of the blood-filled uterine lining and suppression of uterine immune function. It is thus easy during heat for bacteria in the vagina to ascend to the uterus to cause infection. The uterus with pyometra swells dramatically and is filled with pus, bacteria, dying tissue, and toxins. Without treatment, the pet is expected to die. Despite her serious medical state, she must be spayed quickly if her life is to be saved. *This is an extremely common disease of older unspayed female dogs! Pyometra is not something that might happen; consider that it probably will happen.*

The older unspayed female dog has an irregular heat cycle. There is no end of cycling comparable to human menopause. If you still decide against spaying, be very familiar with the signs of pyometra. (These include loss of appetite, lethargy, vomiting, excessive thirst, marked vaginal discharge.)

## **Now That We Know Why It Is A Good Idea To Spay, What Exactly Happens?**

Your pet will stay for the day. Please bring her in between 7:30-9:00am the day of surgery, with no breakfast (water is OK). She will have blood tests done in the morning to make sure that surgery and anesthesia will be safe. All patients will have pain medication before, during, and after surgery. We use I.V. (intravenous, "in the vein") sedatives and gas anesthesia, and heart and oxygen monitors during the procedure. An incision is made on the midline of the abdomen, and the three points where the ovaries and uterus attaches are tied off and cut. The abdomen is checked for bleeding. Incisions are closed with 2-3 layers of suture (stitches); the skin is closed with surgical glue. There will be no skin stitches. Our surgery patient care giver will call you when your pet has recovered.

We will release her the afternoon of surgery, in most cases. Pain medication in the form of a chewable tablet will be sent home with your pet. The tablets are to be given as prescribed until gone. No baths until at least one week after surgery.

## **What To Expect At Home**

Most spay patients go home the same day as if nothing had happened, although some will need pain medication for a few days. Some nausea may occur in the first couple of days after surgery and it would not be unusual for the pet to refuse food for a day or two after surgery. As noted above, a cough may persist for a couple of days as a result of the throat tube. This should not persist longer than a couple of days.

Dogs that show a propensity to lick their stitches will need an Elizabethan or "E" collar to restrict access to the stitches. This is not very comfortable for the dog but must be used strictly until the stitches are out and the incision is healed.

Activity should be restricted during the week following surgery. Excessive activity can lead to swelling or fluid accumulation under the incision. If a fluid pocket forms, it should resolve on its own after a few weeks. If a fluid pocket forms and drains liquid from the incision, the dog should be re-checked with the veterinarian.

*Spaying is one of the most important preventive health measures that can be provided for a female dog of any age.*

## **What About Behavioral Changes?**

The female dog's reproductive tract is dormant for most of the year. It only activates for the 3-week period of heat. This means that from a behavioral stand point, the female dog acts spayed most of the time. It is unlikely that any change will be evident.

*Health benefits from spaying are too important to ignore. Please call for spay scheduling for your female dog.*



## **Spay/Neuter Myths**

### **1. MY DOG WILL GET FAT AND LAZY.**

With the right amount of food and exercise, your pet will not become overweight following spay/neuter. He/She will require fewer calories to maintain proper weight and should be fed less - he will be less expensive to feed! A dog's laziness or inactivity depends on his personality and temperament.

### **2. IT'S IMPORTANT TO LET A FEMALE HAVE ONE HEAT PERIOD.**

There is no proven benefit in allowing one heat cycle. One heat cycle is one extra risk of unwanted pregnancy. Females will generally be temperamental during this period, will drip on your floor, and will attract a yard-full of waiting suitors. Spaying prior to the first heat cycle will prevent 98% of all breast (mammary) cancers.

### **3. SPAYING IS DANGEROUS.**

When done by a licensed veterinarian, elective spay/neuter surgery is actually less dangerous than the stress and danger of complications possible in pregnancy.

### **4. STERILIZED PETS AREN'T GOOD WATCH DOGS.**

Animals that are spay or neutered are generally more content with home and family and are more devoted. The "bad" watchdog would be "bad" sterilized or not.

### **5. BUT MY DOG IS PUREBRED / UNUSUAL / SPECIAL**

If you think your pet should be bred for any of these reasons, visit your local shelters. See the many special, beautiful dogs and the large number of purebreds there. Approximately 70% of these dogs will be euthanized. There aren't enough homes for them all. For every puppy you place, another goes homeless.

### **6. BUT MY DOG IS A MALE!**

While a female dog can have two litters per year, a male could sire that many in an afternoon! He can sense a female in season within a 2 ½ mile radius and will do anything to get to her. Neutered males are far less quarrelsome and more content to stay home with you.

### **7. I WOULDN'T DO IT TO MYSELF; I COULDN'T DO IT TO MY DOG!**

Animals conceive and produce litters purely on biological instinct, an instinct which lasts for that moment alone. They don't feel deprived by sterilization, but an unsterilized dog will feel extreme frustration when in season or when they sense an in-season female is nearby. This frustration often leads to behavior problems and aggression.

The Benefits of Spaying and Neutering. <http://www.diamondsintheruff.com/whyspayneuter.html>