

# Neutering your female dog



On average 14 dogs per day were "put to sleep" in Ireland last year (2010).

**YOU** can help dramatically lower this unnecessary statistic by having **your** dog neutered.

## The jargon

Neutering is the general term used to describe the removal of an animal's reproductive organs.

Spaying and ovario-hysterectomy are the terms used to describe the surgical removal of a female dog's ovaries and uterus (womb).

## The benefits of spaying

Spaying prevents unwanted pregnancies and pyometra (womb infection).

However, its effect on mammary cancer is the most significant health reason for early spaying (before the first 'heat').

Mammary cancer is the most common type of cancer in the bitch, forming 52% of all tumours. Spaying a bitch at a young age dramatically reduces the risk of mammary cancer as follows:

- Prior to first 'heat' reduces the risk to 0.05%
- Between the first and second 'heat' reduces the risk to 8%
- After the second 'heat' reduces the risk to 26%
- After 2.5 years or 4 'heat' cycles: no effect

Aside from the medical benefits of spaying, remember to consider the practicalities of owning a bitch in heat. There will often be a queue of un-neutered kamikaze male dogs camping on your driveway who will literally

attempt all means of entry to access your dog, not to mention the "spotting" of blood on your floor.

### **When to spay**

The surgical veterinary team at UCD recommends that female dogs should be neutered at 5-6 months of age.

### **Are there any disadvantages?**

It has been reported that urinary incontinence is more likely to occur in spayed bitches.

However, most cases respond well to simple treatment, and the majority of people agree that this risk is much less serious than the risk of malignant mammary cancer.

Neutering is thought to cause behavioural changes which lead to increased food intake and reduced activity levels which can result in the dog becoming overweight.

This can be overcome by reducing your dog's food intake (by the amount advised by your veterinary practitioner) and ensuring she is regularly exercised.

### **The cost**

The exact cost should be discussed with your local veterinary practice, if you are in receipt of social welfare payments or pensions please ask if the practice participates in the Dogs Trust Neutering Scheme.

### **Common myths**

*"It is best to let a bitch have a litter before spaying"*

There are absolutely NO benefits to allowing a bitch to have a litter, in fact, due to the possible complications involved in producing a litter it is actually a health risk!

*"Neutering is cruel"*

Nobody wants to put their pet through an operation but the only way we can prevent the needless destruction of thousands of dogs a year in this country is to neuter our pets, not to mention the health benefits listed above.

*"The operation will make my dog fat and lazy"*

Correct nutritional adjustments and adequate exercise will prevent your dog from gaining weight. A dog cannot become overweight by herself; she has to be overfed and/or under-exercised.

*"My dog never goes outside alone"*

Not even a 6 foot wall can stop some dogs when a female is in heat; they will dig or climb and have even been known to mate through fences!

*"My dog is a thoroughbred!"*

Pounds and rescue organisations all over Ireland have pedigree dogs!

**Source of information:** [www.spayweekireland.ie](http://www.spayweekireland.ie)