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## ***WHY SHOULD I NEUTER MY MALE DOG?***

**Medical Considerations:** By removing the source of the male hormone (testosterone) from the body, we reduce the incidence of prostate disease and tumors involving the anal area and tail gland. As male dogs age, the prostate enlarges which can lead to constipation due to pressure on the colon, and bladder infections due to irritation from the prostate. We recommend that puppies be neutered at five to six months of age. If the puppy is to be shown or used for breeding, it should still be neutered at five or six years old.

**Behavioral Considerations:** As male dogs reach puberty, various secondary characteristics and behavioral changes can be observed. Some of these include undesirable aggression toward people and/or other dogs (especially male dogs), leash pulling, and humping behavior. An intact male dog may also have a tendency to “mark his territory” or urinate in inappropriate places. If such behavior is allowed to continue as dogs age, the behavior becomes learned and our chances of eliminating such behavior by neutering are greatly reduced. We recommend that non-breeding males be neutered as early as five months of age to eliminate such unwanted behavior.

Male dogs have been known to wander many miles from their neighborhoods, led instinctively by their attraction to female dogs in heat. Neutered dogs show a reduced desire to roam. Keeping these dogs at home helps to ensure their safety as well as helping to eliminate unwanted pregnancies.

## ***WHY SHOULD I SPAY MY FEMALE DOG?***

**Medical Considerations:** Current research shows that if you spay your dog prior to her first heat, at six months old, we can virtually eliminate breast cancer in her lifetime. If we spay her after her first heat, we can reduce her incidence of breast cancer by 92%

Breast tumors affect middle-aged to older dogs; they appear in benign and malignant forms. The benign form can be stationary in one or several breasts without changing for many years. Cancer cells from the malignant form, however, can move rapidly to the chest cavity where tumors can grow unnoticed in the lungs. There is no way to tell if a tumor is benign or malignant without surgically removing the mass and sending it to a pathologist for diagnosis. We strongly urge you to spay all non-breeding female dogs early to help prevent this form of cancer.

When a dog is spayed, a complete ovariectomy (removal of ovaries and uterus) is performed. The benefit of the procedure is to stop the effects of the female hormones on the breasts and to eliminate all chances of ovarian cancer, uterine cancer, and uterine infections. Elderly female dogs are prone to uterine infections. Patients affected with uterine infections become weak, debilitated, and often toxic. Surgery must be performed at this stage to cure the problem and these patients are at an increased anesthetic risk. It is always advantageous to spay a dog prior to the onset of problems.

**Behavioral Considerations:** During heat cycles, female dogs are more apt to wander away from home in search of a mate. Without the hormonal influence, females are less likely to roam and have unwanted pregnancies. If you choose to breed your dog, she should be spayed, regardless of age, at the completion of her breeding years.

Occasionally female dogs will have an increased chance of urinary dribbling after being spayed. This problem is relatively rare and very treatable. The benefits of spaying the dog well outweigh the risk of this potential problem.

## ***In Conclusion:***

Myths that spaying or neutering will change your dog's personality or create a fat, lazy dog should be ignored. It is our responsibility as pet owners to keep our dogs active and trim.

Please don't hesitate to discuss any questions or concerns about these procedures with one of our doctors.