

WHAT IS A CASTRATION (NEUTER) IN DOGS?

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A castration (neuter) is the surgical removal of the male reproductive organs. The operation removes the two testicles.

WHAT ARE THE INDICATIONS FOR PERFORMING A CASTRATION?

This operation is indicated to prevent pregnancy, remove diseased or cancerous testicles, reduce male behavior such as urine marking, territorial aggression and roaming, and markedly decrease the risk of acquired diseases of the male reproductive system. The neuter operation essentially removes the possibility of testicular cancer and reduces the risk of prostatic enlargement.

WHAT PREOPERATIVE EXAMINATIONS OR TESTS ARE NEEDED?

Preoperative tests depend in part on the age and general health of the pet. In young dogs, minimal tests are needed provided the pet has been vaccinated, dewormed, and proven healthy based on clinical examination. Often simple blood tests, such as a packed cell volume or blood count, are done prior to anesthesia. In older animals, it is common to perform a routine blood count, serum biochemical tests, urinalysis, and possibly a chest X-ray or EKG prior to anesthesia. These recommendations vary on a case-by-case basis and depend on the overall health of the pet.

WHAT TYPE OF ANESTHESIA IS NEEDED?

The procedure requires general anesthesia to induce complete unconsciousness and relaxation. In the usual case, the pet receives a pre-anesthetic sedative-analgesic drug to help him relax, a brief intravenous anesthetic to allow placement of a breathing tube in the windpipe, and subsequently inhalation (gas) anesthesia in oxygen during the actual surgery.

How Is the Operation Done?

Following anesthesia, the pet is placed on a surgical table, lying on his back. The hair just in front of the scrotum (the skin pouch containing the testicles) is clipped and the skin is scrubbed with surgical soap to disinfect the area. A sterile drape is placed over the surgical site. Your veterinarian uses a scalpel to incise the skin just in front of the testicles. The testicles are identified and the major blood vessels and vas deferens are ligated (tied off). This must be done before these organs can be removed. Sutures (stitches) that dissolve over time are used to tie off the blood vessels. The incision is then closed with one or two layers of self-dissolving sutures (stitches). The outer layer of skin is closed with sutures or surgical staples; these need to be removed in about 10 to 14 days.

HOW LONG DOES THE OPERATION TAKE TO PERFORM?

The procedure takes about 20 minutes to 45 minutes to perform in most cases, including the needed time for preparation and anesthesia. In older or large-breed dogs the procedure can take longer.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND COMPLICATIONS OF A CASTRATION (NEUTER) OPERATION?

The overall risk of this surgery in a healthy young pet is very low. While there are no published statistics, the risk of death is probably less than 1 in 500. The major risks are those of general anesthesia, bleeding (hemorrhage), post-operative infection, and wound breakdown (dehiscence) over the incision. Overall complication rate is low, but serious complications can result in death or the need for additional surgery.

WHAT IS THE TYPICAL POST-OPERATIVE CARE?

Post-operative medication should be given to relieve pain, which is judged in most cases to be mild to moderate and can be effectively eliminated with safe and effective pain medicines. Generally young dogs begin to act normal within 24 to 48 hours and are released the same day or the day following surgery, and it is difficult to determine that they just completed surgery. The home care requires reduced activity until the stitches are removed in 10 to 14 days. You should inspect the incision line daily for signs of redness, discharge, swelling, or pain, and prevent your pet from licking the incision.

HOW LONG IS THE HOSPITAL STAY?

The typical stay is one day.