



Main Street Veterinary Services
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Is a Vasectomy Right for My Dog?

The decision on whether to neuter your dog is a complicated one and all options should be discussed with your veterinarian. There are many factors to consider including age, sex, breed, health status, intended use, household environment, and temperament. While there are health benefits to neutering, the health benefits must be weighed against the health benefits of leaving your dog intact, retaining their sex hormones. The advantages and disadvantages of each option relate to all dogs, regardless of their lifestyle. There is no “right” or “wrong” decision to make as each dog is an individual, and each family situation is different. The decision comes down to what is best for you and your dog.

If you have decided that you are not going use your dog for breeding purposes, you now have a decision to make and different options to explore. What is the difference between a neuter and a vasectomy? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each procedure? At what age should you consider having your dog neutered?

What is the difference between a neuter and a vasectomy?

Vasectomy

- Removes part of the vas deferens, the cord that carries sperm from the testicles to the outside of the body
- Testicles remain in the scrotum
- Hormone production and function is maintained
- Cannot impregnate a female >2mo after procedure
 - ***Possibly can impregnate a female for 2 months after the procedure

Traditional Neuter

- Removes the testicles
- Hormone production and function NOT maintained
- Cannot impregnate a female

What are the advantages of Vasectomy (retaining the testes)?

Behavioral Advantages

- Decreased incidence of cognitive dysfunction syndrome
- Less fearfulness, noise phobias, and undesirable sexual behaviors
- Less aggression towards people and animals



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Health Advantages

- Sex hormone production and function is maintained
 - Sex hormones, in conjunction with other growth-related hormones, promote the closure of the growth plates at puberty, so the bones of dogs neutered before puberty continue to grow
 - Sex hormones are critical for achieving peak bone density
- Lower incidence of hemangiosarcoma (cancer usually found in the spleen or heart), osteosarcoma (bone cancer), transitional cell carcinoma (bladder cancer), prostatic adenocarcinoma (prostate cancer), lymphosarcoma (cancer of lymphatic tissue)
- Lower incidence of obesity, which may be due at least partly to increased metabolic rate
- Lower incidence of immune mediated diseases like atopic dermatitis, diabetes mellitus and hypothyroidism, hypoadrenocorticism, autoimmune hemolytic anemia, inflammatory bowel disease
- Reduced incidence of cranial cruciate rupture and hip dysplasia

What are the disadvantages of retaining the testes?

Behavioral Disadvantages

- Intact males may compete for territory or females in heat resulting in:
 - Inter-dog aggression
 - Increased risk of wandering and being hit by a car
- Increased incidence of urinary marking
- Ongoing sexual behaviors

Health Disadvantages

- Increased risk of testicular cancer - incidence of testicular cancer is common but malignancy and mortality are very low
- Risk of unwanted pregnancies if a vasectomy is not performed
- Increased risk of prostatitis, benign prostatic hyperplasia, prostatic cysts and squamous metaplasia of the prostate
- Increased incidence of perineal and inguinal hernia and perineal adenoma



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When Should you Neuter your Dog?

If you opt for a traditional neuter, the age at which the procedure is performed is important. Removing the testes interrupt the hormonal axis of the sex hormones with the pituitary gland and other organs and may make the risks of some diseases higher in certain breeds or individuals, particularly when performed at an early age. We recommend waiting until at least 12 months of age or older, usually past puberty, due to health and behavioral advantages.

If you opt for a non-traditional approach, the vasectomy, where you leave the testes but interrupt the reproductive tract to prevent fertility, you may consider doing this at any age. Because the male sex organs are left to function, your dog will still have his or her hormones.

For more information, please visit the [Parsemus Foundation](#) website for further insight on hormone-sparing sterilization.