

Dog Castration

Castration of the dog involves removal of both testicles, and sometimes removal of the scrotum, under general anaesthesia. The operation is usually carried out as a day procedure and rarely requires an overnight stay. In most cases the dog will be back to his usual self the following day, although he will need to be kept quiet for a week or two. Castration of the dog is something many owners feel strongly about, especially men! Below we have outlined the main arguments for and against castration.

General anaesthesia – there is always an inherent risk with any general anaesthetic or surgical procedure, whether in the dog, cat, horse or indeed human. As Riverside we minimise the risk as much as possible by carrying out a full pre-operative health check and blood test if requested. We use the safest anaesthetic drugs available, combined with constant monitoring by nurses and specialised equipment. We also ensure that any animal undergoing surgery receives adequate pain relief both during and after the procedure.



Testicular cancer accounts for 5% of all canine tumours. Many of these are benign, meaning that they are unlikely to spread, but often secrete hormones which may lead to enlargement of the breast tissue, attractiveness to other males, hair loss, enlargement of the prostate gland, and suppression of the bone marrow (which is responsible for producing blood cells). Castration removes the risk of testicular cancer.

Behaviour can be affected by neutering, both in bitches and dogs. If a dog is aggressive or dominant towards people or other animals the first advice given by behaviourists is castration to remove the testosterone influence on the animal. In many cases the animal becomes calmer and easier to manage, and many of the aggressive and dominant traits are reduced. Aggressive dogs are dangerous.

Other aspects of dog behaviour can be modified by castration, included the urge to 'mate' with inappropriate objects, other dogs and even human legs! Once a male dog has developed certain habits they can be difficult to break – think carefully before allowing your dog to mate a female! Neutered dogs are much less likely to wander away from homes in search of bitches in season, and it stops unplanned litters of puppies. **Approximately 2,500 dogs were put to sleep** in dog shelters last year as they were unable to find homes. Scent marking of the home territory (usually by inappropriate urination) is seen much less commonly in castrated males.

Castrated dogs have a much **reduced risk of prostate disease**, either inflammatory or cancerous. Disease of the prostate gland is very painful, and can easily be prevented by castration. Some **tumours** of the anal area are more common in entire males, as is the risk of hernia formation (failure of the supporting structures in the pelvic area to contain the abdominal organs). This predisposition is due to the affects of testosterone and the risk of both conditions can be greatly reduced by castration.

If a dog is **cryptorchid**, (one or both of the testicles have not descended into the scrotum) the testicles are far more prone to developing cancer. The right testicle is most commonly retained, and in the dog it may be situated within the abdomen. In these cases, castration is always required, and these animals should not be used for breeding as it an inherited condition. Testicular torsion occurs more commonly in retained testicles, but also does occur in normal dogs. This is a very painful condition and requires emergency surgery.

Due to changes in the metabolism after a dog has been neutered, they may be prone to weight gain. **Controlled food intake** or feeding a 'light' diet and ensuring a dog is exercised regularly will help to prevent this.

At Riverside it is our opinion that the **benefits of castrating dogs** far outweigh the potential problems, and we advise all animals not intended for breeding are neutered. Although every dog must be considered on an individual basis, most can be castrated from six months of age although it is never too late to benefit from castration. If both testicles have not descended into the scrotum by one year of age the dog is a cryptorchid and castration is advisable as soon as possible because of the risk of cancer.

Obviously the decision to neuter your dog is up to you, the owners, but we hope the information presented here helps to clear up any confusion. If you have any questions regarding castration of the dog or any other queries regarding your pet, please do not hesitate to contact the surgery.