**Neutering Your Dog**

Neutering your dog prevents both male and female dogs from being able to reproduce.

Neutering in the male involves a general anaesthetic and the surgical removal of the testicles. This process is also known as ‘castration’.

Female dogs have a season for roughly three weeks every six months. Neutering in the female involves a general anaesthetic with surgical removal of both the ovaries and uterus, also referred to as ‘spaying’ or an ‘ovariohysterectomy’.

**Why should I neuter my dog?**

Neutering is a humane way to reduce the stray dog population, preventing thousands of unwanted puppies being born each year. These may be cruelly abandoned or needlessly destroyed. There are lots of other reasons why neutering is advised by your veterinary surgeon:

**Health**

* Un-neutered females can become pregnant and with any pregnancy there are risks. The greatest risk is if the bitch has difficulty giving birth to the puppies. This can result in a general anaesthetic and emergency Caesarean. There are no guarantees that the puppies or the bitch will survive this procedure.
* False pregnancies can lead to an infection of the mammary glands (Mastitis), which is extremely painful for the bitch and requires a course of medication.
* Un-neutered females in later life may develop a variety of cancers such as mammary tumours, ovarian, uterine (womb).
* Un-neutered male dogs may potentially develop testicular, prostate and anal tumours.
* Entire females are at risk from developing a womb infection (known as a Pyometra) which can be fatal.
* The cost of neutering is generally small when compared to emergency surgery, however, the cost should not be the main reason to neuter or not. The risks associated with having any surgery in an older or un-well dog is far greater than that of a young, healthy dog.

**Behaviour**

* Neutering the male dog will help reduce unwanted sexual behaviour such as mounting cushions or visitor’s legs.
* Female hormones may convince the bitch she is pregnant (false pregnancy) causing her to become possessive of toys or other objects. This can potentially lead to more guarding behaviours as she believes these objects are her pups and can cause her to become very stressed.
* Male dogs are more prone to stray from home in search of a bitch in season which can lead to injuries and accidents.

**When should I neuter my dog?**

Neutering is recommended between 5-6 months of age for both males and females. Neutering should not be carried out whilst the bitch is in season. It is usually recommended to neuter the bitch three months after the start of her season.

**How long will it take to recover?**

In most veterinary practices the dog is a day-patient so there is no overnight stay. Some patients can be a little sleepy from the general anaesthetic when they return home. It is normally recommended that the patient is kept quiet for around ten days post-operation. This is to give the wound time to heal. They will be discharged with an Elizabethan collar or an abdominal bandage (like a T-shirt) to protect the wound and with pain relief medication for 4-5 days. They will be checked by a nurse at 3 days and 10 days after surgery to check the wound is healing well and sutures are normally removed at 10 days.