



### **Spaying Your Female Dog**

Spaying a female dog is a surgical procedure to remove the uterus (womb) and ovaries. This ensures that she does not come into season (heat), nor can she become pregnant. The surgery is carried out under general anaesthesia and performed by a veterinary surgeon. All female dogs should be spayed unless they are to be bred.

#### **Benefits of Spaying Your Dog**

##### **1. Stopping seasons**

Twice a year for approximately a month a female dog comes into season and is attractive to male dogs. Despite every effort to keep her safe she may still become pregnant. This attractiveness can be a nuisance to you, your family and your neighbours as numbers of male dogs can gather outside your home.

Occasionally the odour from a dog in season can get onto clothes making people attractive to male dogs. This can present an unpleasant and embarrassing situation, especially for children as dogs may pursue them or even try to mount them.

##### **2. Unwanted Puppies**

Spaying your dog is the best way to ensure she can never have puppies. It is also an important way of reducing the number of unwanted dogs needlessly destroyed every year in Ireland. Figures from the Department of the Environment for 2005 show that 16,546 dogs were destroyed, a rate 10 times higher than in the UK.

##### **3. Preventive Health**

- a) Breast cancer causes 52% of all cancers in female dogs, about half of which are malignant. The incidence of mammary tumours in entire female dogs can be as high as 71%. By the time owners seek veterinary attention many malignant cancers have already spread to other parts of the body making successful treatment almost impossible. Spaying a female dog before her first season reduces the overall risk of cancer by more than 50%, and makes her 2,000 times less likely to develop breast cancer in comparison to spaying at 3 years old.
- b) A life threatening womb infection called *pyometritis* frequently develops later in life in unspayed dogs that have not had puppies. Emergency surgery may be required to remove the diseased womb.
- c) False pregnancies commonly occur after a season and are extremely distressing for your pet.
- d) Throughout their seasons female dogs are at increased risk of injuries from road traffic as they may try to escape while looking for a mate or are chased by male dogs.
- e) Spaying significantly reduces the risk of diabetes mellitus developing.

#### 4. **Safety.**

Spaying is the safest and most effective method of controlling your female dog's reproduction. The alternative is a contraceptive type injection every 5 months. Although these drugs are safe, there are side effects. Contraceptive failures occur as owners may forget to have the treatment given at the proper time.

#### **When to Spay**

The surgery may be done once vaccination is complete, from 4 - 5 months of age on and before the first season. It is best to spay midway between seasons in older dogs.

If your dog is in season there is a small increase in surgical risk and it may be better to delay the surgery until the season is over. Despite this, many owners opt to have the surgery done while in season. If you suspect that your bitch has become pregnant and do not want her to have puppies, surgery can be safely carried out within the first 4 weeks of pregnancy. Surgeries are performed Monday to Friday by appointment only.

#### **The Surgery.**

The patient must be in good health and have up-to-date vaccinations. On the morning of the surgery she is weighed and you will be asked to sign a *Form of Consent* for the surgery. She is then examined and sedated, and once relaxed and sleepy is put under general anaesthesia that is maintained with oxygen and an anaesthetic gas. Her lower abdomen is prepared for the surgery by removing the hair and surgically scrubbing the skin. An incision is made through the skin and muscle layer into her abdomen. The uterus and ovaries are removed and the blood supply tied off. The muscles and skin are sutured separately. Once the procedure is complete the patient is allowed recover under close supervision, and under normal circumstances will be ready to go home after 5 pm.

#### **After the Surgery**

You will be given a *Post Operative Directions* sheet when the patient is discharged. Please read this carefully. The patient should not be fed on the day of the surgery and exercise should be restricted until after the sutures are removed.

Spaying does not put on weight, but neutered dogs are twice as likely to be overweight. Excess weight is related to an inappropriate diet. Feed only good quality food, no human food or treats, and exercise daily. If you are concerned about your dog's weight, please ask about special low calorie or weight reduction diets available at City Vet.

Your dog's temperament should not alter, if anything spaying should may make her more settled and home loving.

#### **Urinary Incontinence**

As a consequence of spaying some large breed dogs develop urinary incontinence, or dribble urine, especially when asleep. The condition can occur at any time and is not related to when the age the dog is spayed. Treatment is required and is usually successful.