

DESEXING

Desexing renders dogs and bitches unable to breed, and removes the sexual urge. Temporary or semi-permanent control can be effected by the use of certain drugs, however surgical desexing is permanent and has fewer side effects.

What are the advantages and disadvantages?

If you do not intend to breed from your dog surgical desexing has undoubted advantages both in the male and the female. In the male dog it removes the sexual urge so that if the dog gets the scent of a bitch in oestrus he is unlikely to show any interest, which in certain breeds can be an undoubted advantage. Male dogs desexed prior to maturity are less likely to wander, as they will not be attracted to bitches on heat in the neighbourhood. Desexing the bitch prevents oestrus as well as breeding. She will not come into heat and therefore will not have to be confined and deprived of her usual exercise and companionship. Heat usually occurs twice a year for at least 3 weeks each time.

Owners are often tempted to have at least one litter from a bitch. There appears to be a general misconception that having a litter will improve temperament. There is no scientific evidence to support this theory. It has however been proven that neutering in the bitch not only prevents uterine disease but also reduces the possibility of breast cancer.

Bitches on heat (oestrus) often surprise their owners with their determined and often successful attempts to escape to be mated. Once desexed the bitch will have no oestrus and will not have unwanted puppies or phantom pregnancies, which in some bitches causes a lot of distress.

It is a common fallacy that a desexed dog will become fat and lazy. Remember that all service animals, Guide Dogs, Hearing Dogs and Dogs for the Disabled are routinely desexed. Judicious feeding of a complete diet without excessive titbits should adequately control any problems of obesity, just as it does in the entire animal.

Another common fallacy is that the desexed dog loses character. Admittedly desexing is often carried out, both in dogs and bitches, for certain behavioural abnormalities and often dogs will become more gentle but they lose neither their spirit nor their intelligence and provided they are not allowed to become obese are just as active as the entire counterpart.

Thus there are many advantages and few disadvantages to having your dog desexed.

Both dogs and bitches are usually desexed between 6-12 months of age although the operation can be carried out at any time. The desexing of females is most straightforward when they are not on heat, pregnant or overweight. We recommend bitches be desexed closer to 6 months of age, when the immaturity of the ovaries and uterus facilitates their removal.

In the male, desexing entails removal of the testicles. Occasionally one or both testicles have failed to descend into the scrotum. Desexing these dogs is more complicated but well advised, as testicles retained within the abdomen are more vulnerable to tumour development later in life.

The desexing procedure is done under general anaesthesia and so requires that the dog is in good health and has been fasted of food and water for twelve hours prior to surgery. General anaesthesia always carries a slight risk but with modern anaesthetic agents, this risk is minimal. The dog will be examined on admission to the hospital prior to receiving a premedication. This is the time to discuss any remaining questions and inform the veterinarian if your dog is not in peak health.

The surgery is performed during the morning and the dog remains in hospital under observation for the afternoon when they are discharged. We will discuss the details of aftercare with you at the time of discharge but plan to keep your pet inside and warm the first night after the anaesthetic and confined for the first week to minimise exercise and aid wound healing.

Disclaimer: This information is of a general nature only, and must not be used as veterinary advice except where directed by your veterinarian. Hall Veterinary Surgery Pty Ltd does not warrant the suitability of this information for specific cases. If your animal is unwell or you want to act on this information, please contact us on 6230 2223.