

DESEXING - WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

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Desexing your pet (what every pet owner should know)

For many pet owners the question of desexing is an important issue. The first question to ask yourself is whether or not you intend to use your pet for breeding. Usually that answer is straight forward. If you answer 'no' to the breeding question you then have to decide if you should have your pet desexed. Here are some points to consider to help you arrive at a decision.

Unwanted pregnancies

The mating urge of cats and dogs is incredibly strong so mishaps do occur frequently. Following mating, pregnancy can be prevented by injection of the female hormone oestrogen. There are disadvantages, however. Oestrogen may significantly prolong the heat cycle of dogs and cats and can also cause serious infection of the uterus or blood abnormalities. If your intention was to desex your pet it can still be done safely in early pregnancy. If performed within the first month after mating it is safe and is a sensible way to deal with an unwanted pregnancy.

Desexing

The operations performed on humans for birth control, tying the fallopian tubes of the female or cutting the vas deferens of the male (vasectomy), are seldom appropriate to dogs and cats. The reason is that, in addition to preventing unwanted pregnancies in our pets, we also want to prevent annoying and antisocial behaviour. To do this it is necessary to remove the main source of their sex hormones, the ovaries in the female (speying) and the testicles in the male (castration).

Speying

All non-breeding female cats and dogs should be desexed.

This is a major operation in which both ovaries and the uterus are removed. It is performed under general anaesthetic. Most animals are on their feet within two hours and most are able to go home on the same day.

There are some common fallacies about desexing you should know about. It is **not** necessary for female dogs and cats to have a litter before desexing. The operation will not change their personalities nor will it automatically cause them to become overweight.

Apart from the prevention of unwanted litters, speying female cats and dogs reduces the risk of infections of the uterus and, of course, there are no annoying heat cycles. In dogs, speying also reduces the likelihood of mammary tumours, one of the more common forms of cancer in pets.

Castration

Desexing male dogs and cats is as important as speying females.

Castration is the removal of both testicles. It is a simpler operation than speying, but it also carried out under general anaesthetic.

Responsible pet owners care about reducing the number of unwanted kittens and puppies.

Desexing your male dog or cat does help. But there are other benefits too. Your pet will be cleaner and more content to stay at home. He will not smell, will not be tempted to urinate in the house and will be far less aggressive, though he will be as keen as ever to protect his own territory. Fear not, the desexing operation will **not** change his personality nor cause him to become overweight. Most overweight pets are overfed and under-exercised. Desexing will make your pet happier, healthier and longer lived.