



**Reading Animal Clinic**

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**Reproductive Handout**

Recently the age of when to spay or neuter your dog has become more of a personalized recommendation based on your dog's specific needs and breed rather than a single, standardized recommendation. Often surgery is performed when dogs are more mature or have gone through at least one heat cycle. This may serve to prevent certain types of bone cancers, orthopedic disease, or urinary incontinence. We provide this handout to help answer some commonly asked questions. Please refer to your veterinarian for their recommendation on when you should spay or neuter your pet.

**Information for FEMALE dogs:**

Onset of the heat cycle is variable depending on the breed of dog. Smaller breeds may enter their first heat cycle between 6-10 months of age. Large breed dogs may not begin to cycle until 18-24 months of age. On average, we see dogs come into their heat cycle around 6-9 months of age.

Dogs will cycle throughout the year. Dogs will cycle every 5-11 months, with the average every 7 months.

**What to expect:**

- vaginal bleeding
- enlargement of the vulva, this may persist
- nipple enlargement, this may persist
- attraction of males
- change in behavior
- more frequent urination

**How long will the bleeding last?** Although it is variable, on average 7-10 days. The color of the discharge will likely change from a red color to a straw color.

**When can I schedule the spay?** We prefer to schedule the spay 6-8 weeks after the bleeding stops. When dogs are actively in their heat cycle there is increased blood supply which raises risk of bleeding while in surgery. A few weeks after their heat cycle, the blood supply, as well as risk of surgical bleeding, decreases.

**Are there any precautions I should take when my pet is in heat?** If you have a male housemate who is not neutered, please keep them separated to prevent any unintended breedings. Refrain from going to dog parks where unneutered male dogs may be present. If applicable, check with your daycare or boarding facility to see if they have any restrictions while your pet is in heat.

The older and the more heat cycles a dog experiences, the more at risk they are for developing a pyometra. Pyometra, in simple terms, is a life-threatening infection of the uterus. It usually occurs approximately 1 to 2 months after a heat. You may notice vaginal discharge, decreased appetite, vomiting and increased thirst and urination. There are cases however, where there is no discharge, so it is important to monitor your dog's behavior after her cycle.

### **Information regarding neutering in MALE dogs:**

Recent research has shown benefits in delaying neutering for males until they are fully grown. This is usually at one year of age or older. Waiting can help benefit their growth and decrease the likelihood of certain orthopedic diseases and bone cancer.

While a male dog is intact, please be aware that they may be more likely to roam or escape. There may also be some behavioral changes that occur such as urine marking or aggression. Some pet owners may elect to neuter their pets sooner than a year of age due to different limitations like boarding or day care requirements. Please refer to your veterinarian for their recommendation on when you should neuter your pet.

### **Breed Specific information regarding spay and neuter:**

A recent study compared 35 different dog breeds evaluating joint disorders, cancers and urinary incontinence to help guide veterinarians in determining the ideal age for spay and neuter. This study can be used as a guide for you and your veterinarian to determine a plan for when to

schedule your pets spay or neuter procedure. What is important is to make a plan that is best for both you and your pet.

Suggested guidelines for age of neutering: 35 breeds										
	Males					Females				
	Leave intact	Choice	Beyond 6 months	Beyond 11 months	Beyond 23 months	Leave intact	Choice	Beyond 6 months	Beyond 11 months	Beyond 23 months
Australian Cattle Dog		✓						✓		
Australian Shepherd		✓					✓			
Beagle				✓			✓			
Bernese Mt. Dog					✓		✓			
Border Collie				✓					✓	
Boston Terrier				✓			✓			
Boxer					✓					✓
Bulldog		✓					✓			
Cavalier King Charles Spaniel		✓					✓			
Chihuahua		✓					✓			
Cocker Spaniel			✓							✓
Collie		✓							✓	
Corgi			✓				✓			
Dachshund		✓					✓			
Doberman Pinscher	✓									✓
English Springer Spaniel		✓							✓	
German Shepherd					✓					✓
Golden Retriever				✓		✓				
Great Dane		✓					✓			
Irish Wolfhound					✓		✓			
Jack Russell Terrier		✓					✓			
Labrador Retriever			✓						✓	
Maltese		✓					✓			
Miniature Schnauzer		✓					✓			
Pomeranian		✓					✓			
Poodle (Toy)		✓					✓			
Poodle (Miniature)				✓			✓			
Poodle (Standard)					✓		✓			
Pug		✓					✓			
Rottweiler				✓				✓		
Saint Bernard		✓						✓		
Shetland Sheepdog		✓								✓
Shih Tzu		✓								✓
West Highland White Terrier		✓					✓			
Yorkshire Terrier		✓					✓			

Summary of spaying and neutering guidelines based on findings regarding increased risk of joint disorders and cancers. The term "choice" means there was no increased risk for any age.

(Assisting Decision-Making on Age of Neutering for 35 Breeds of Dogs: Associated Joint Disorders, Cancers, and Urinary Incontinence. *Front. Vet. Sci.*, 07 July 2020.)