



THE LABRADOR RESCUE TRUST

ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO NEUTERING

We are pleased to confirm that The Trust will be using the proceeds from an unexpected legacy to pay for the neutering of all dogs re-homed by The Trust from 1st June 2008. Neutering will be carried out at selected vets across the South West and new homes will receive a voucher detailing the dog's name, TLRT number and the name of the closest vet. Your helper, area co-ordinator or vet will advise you on a suitable time for the neutering to take place depending on the dog's age and general health. The Trust is unable to pay for operations carried out by vets who are not in our neutering scheme except in exceptional circumstances when it is in the best interest of the dog. Some dogs of course will have been neutered already but many will not.

It is the policy of The Labrador Rescue Trust that all dogs and bitches should be neutered, as this not only rules out any risk of unwanted puppies but also avoids health problems in later life that can be experienced by both dogs and bitches that are not neutered. The Trust strongly urges you to make arrangements to have your dog castrated/spayed if he/she has not already been done. Under no circumstances, may your 'rescue' dog be used for breeding.

The Trust recommends neutering of bitches after they have had their first season and neutering of dogs aged 12 months or over. It is advisable to seek guidance from your vet if you are in any doubt as to the timing of neutering.

What is neutering?

Neutering is the surgical removal of reproductive organs, ie the removal of testicles in dogs and the removal of ovaries in bitches (although in practice the uterus is also removed as well).

Reasons for neutering:

- Birth control – there are thousands of unwanted puppies and dogs already in this country – and when they stray or are abandoned it falls to voluntary organisations (like The Labrador Rescue Trust) to save them. And whilst The Labrador Rescue Trust would never euthanase a healthy dog, there are still too many unwanted dogs and insufficient resources to look after them all.
- Disease prevention in bitches:

Mammary Cancer: Mammary cancer is VERY common in older entire bitches and varies from being benign to highly malignant. When mammary cancer is



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malignant the prognosis for long-term survival is poor even with surgical and medical treatment.

Pyometra (life-threatening uterine infection): Due to the long gap between seasons in some bitches (the gap tending to increase with age), uterine infection is EXTREMELY common in older bitches. In its acute form the uterus turns into a massive bag (of bacteria, pus and debris – which can lead to toxæmia/septicaemia and/or uterine rupture causing peritonitis). The condition is often fatal, and requires high-risk life-saving surgery.

Unwanted pregnancy/Inappropriate matings: Inconvenient and irresponsible, but also unwanted mating can lead to disease, as well as bringing the normal risks associated with pregnancy and birth, for example, the majority of caesarian sections are a direct result of unwanted matings, where the bitch is either too old, too young or inappropriately-sized to have a successful natural delivery.

False Pregnancy: Some bitches will develop false pregnancies (usually 6-12 weeks after a season), and the likelihood increases with age. The bitch displays obvious maternal behaviour (producing milk, nursing toys/objects, nesting) and is also noticeably distressed (panting, restless, miserable). This may last for up to a month and is difficult (and expensive) to treat. In addition, the condition and treatment are pretty unpleasant for the bitch! Once a bitch has suffered a false pregnancy it is highly likely she will have one every subsequent season.

Others/Misc: There are other diseases prevented by spaying but they are too numerous and uncommon or rare to be listed here.

- Disease prevention in dogs:

Disease prevention in dogs is a little less significant. Castration prevents testicular cancer, prostate disease and some forms of hernia but these conditions are not as common.

- Behavioural Reasons:

Neutering can prevent roaming behaviour/urges in both bitches and dogs. Sadly far too many seriously injured dogs involved in traffic accidents are caused when they have strayed to find mates. DO NOT forget that under UK law you are responsible for any damage caused by your dog and that includes damage to people as well as their cars.



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- Bitches: Having a bitch 'in season' can be inconvenient. You have to contend with 'spotting' on the carpet and also the worry of harassment from male dogs when walking. A 'season' lasts for approximately 21 days – but as the bitch gets older this period may increase.
- Dogs: Many behavioural problems have their roots in testosterone, produced by the testicles. These include mounting dogs/bitches (or people and objects!), territory marking (urinating) and most particularly, aggression (towards dogs or people). These problems, once established, can be incredibly difficult to eradicate even after castration, and in the case of aggression, results in the euthanasia of many dogs (have you noticed it's always the dogs fault?). Early neutering has been well proven to prevent many of these problems.

- Stress Relief:

Just think how easy life would be without sex! Being a dog in human society is a very stressful existence when you aren't allowed to express your normal sex-related behaviour but are meant to be a 'nice', calm, family pet.

Are there any reasons against neutering?

There are many myths about spaying and castration, NONE of which are supported by statistics, science or experience. Like all surgery there are very minor risks associated with the anesthesia and the operation itself, but these risks are miniscule when compared with the benefits of the surgery. The only genuine side-effects – if they can be called that - is that most bitches/dogs have a decreased food requirement once neutered - but a simple reduction in daily food allowance prevents obesity and no other adverse effects are seen. You may also see a change in coat texture in both dogs and bitches.

- “My bitch should have a litter!” - It is not necessary to let your dog have a litter of puppies before neutering. This is an old wives tale that has no scientific basis. In fact, pregnancy/delayed neutering can pose a significant health risk to your dog.
- “Spaying will make my bitch incontinent” – There is no evidence to support this claim. Urinary incontinence is very common in the bitch regardless of neutering.
- “Isn't it all very unnatural?” – Being a domesticated pet is a very unnatural (but very enjoyable) state for a dog, and the natural sexual behaviour of dogs is both unacceptable to us and stressful for them. Ultimately, they have no ability to predict the future and if neutered before 'puberty' they will never miss what they haven't had.



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When should I neuter my dog?

- Bitch: The best time to spay a bitch is just after her first season, as this best reduces the chances of mammary cancer in later life. If a bitch has already had a season then she should be spayed halfway between seasons and approximately 3 months after her last season.
- Dogs: The best time to neuter male dogs is from about 12 months. Early neutering can alter the dog's final appearance but late neutering can allow bad behaviour to flourish.

These Information Sheets are intended to serve as a guideline to new homes and foster homes. They are the result of many years of experience from our helpers and we hope that they provide a useful insight. Please note that these are only guidelines and The Labrador Rescue Trust, its helpers and officers make clear that it is the responsibility of each home/foster home to recognise the needs of their dog and to react to those needs. The Trust, its helpers and officers cannot be held responsible for the behaviour of any individual dog.

THE LABRADOR RESCUE TRUST COMPANY

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