



SPAYING & NEUTERING: FROM THE BEHAVIORAL VIEWPOINT

There are compelling medical reasons for early neutering. There are equally good reasons from a behavioral perspective to wait until your dog is 1 to 2 years of age.

Spaying or neutering your dog during the juvenile period (typically 5-9 months) means that their behavior remains more juvenile. So, if you want a dog that retains puppy-like characteristics for the rest of their life, then spay or neuter your dog at 6-9 months of age. This can be advantageous if there are young children in the family.

If you want your dog to show more adult behavior and take more responsibility, like protector or guard dog, or a dog who is working for a living, then you should not spay or neuter until later.

A male that has not been neutered until after 1 year of age, or a female that has gone through two seasons, have generally become full grown at that time. They are more emotionally mature and have learned more adult-like behaviors.

For those who blame obesity on neutering or spaying, the simple facts are:

- Metabolism is altered and as a result fewer calories burned will cause weight gain
- Proper and careful nutrition controls obesity
- Activity and personalities do not change unless we allow them to change

IN SUMMARY

A thorough, annual check-up is important as well as annual chemistry profiles, fecals, heartworm tests and urinalysis.

Choose your veterinarian with care. You need to be able to communicate with them, express your needs and discuss current issues. If you do not feel comfortable with your vet, consider looking at another veterinarian in your area. You may ask for referrals from friends and your local training facilities.

If you are not going to breed your dog, neutering and spaying is your best decision. The benefits and advantages to your dog's health if spayed or neutered, far outweigh the few disadvantages.

Before you neuter or spay, consider what behaviors you expect from your dog as an adult.