

## The day of the operation

Spaying is routine, but major surgery. Your pet will be admitted on the morning of the operation. Any questions you may have will be answered by the veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse at your pre-operative consultation.

Your pet will be given an injection of pain relief and a mild sedative to help them relax whilst waiting for the operation. Once anaesthetised, an area of hair will be clipped on the belly and the skin prepared for sterile surgery.

After the ovaries and uterus have been removed, incisions in the abdominal muscles, fat and skin will be stitched closed.

## Post-Operative care

Most bitches are able to go home the day the surgery takes place but they must be rested to allow healing. This means restricting your pet to no more than short lead walks for 10-14 days post-operatively.

A 'buster collar' or t-shirt may be required to prevent your dog licking the wound and causing an infection.

Post-operative checks with your vet are required after the operation to ensure everything is healing well and to advise when it is safe to begin exercising again.

You should contact your vet if the wound looks inflamed, open or discharging or if your dog seems in pain or unwell.

## Summary

Where a bitch is not intended to be bred from we fully support spaying, not only as part of responsible pet ownership, but for your pet's benefit also.

We hope that you are now able to make an informed decision regarding spaying. For any further advice please contact your vet for more information.



XLVets Small Animal member veterinary practices work together to share experience, knowledge and ideas to ensure the highest levels of quality and care for their client's pets. XLVet member practices provide a compassionate and caring service for all pets and at the same time offer comprehensive and up-to-date treatment in all fields of veterinary medicine and surgery.



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# NEUTERING YOUR DOG - BITCH SPAY



The majority of bitches in the UK will be spayed (neutered) at some point in their lifetime. However, deciding whether this is appropriate for your bitch and what is the best time for the surgery are things that should be discussed with your vet. This leaflet will help you understand the procedure and its benefits.

## There are multiple indications for spaying:

### Prevention of 'heat'

Owners of entire bitches have to be prepared to cope with their bitch's seasons (heat periods). As well as the issues of mess and hygiene, the ability to exercise a bitch in heat is restricted due to the unwanted attention of male dogs and the risks of unwanted pregnancies.

### Prevention of unwanted pregnancy

A bitch on heat will be attractive to male dogs throughout her season. This can cause difficulties if there are male dogs in the house and when walking your dog.



### Prevention of cancer

Spaying removes the ovaries and therefore prevents ovarian cancer and cysts.

By spaying we can also help reduce the risk of mammary cancer, a very common form of cancer seen in bitches. The greatest preventative effect occurs when spaying before the first season, however there is still a significant reduction when spaying prior to the second. This benefit is less pronounced once the bitch has had two or more seasons.

### Prevention of false pregnancy

After a season, it is common for a bitch to develop enlargement of the mammary glands and she may even produce milk. This is known as a false pregnancy and is also associated with behavioural changes such as nursing favourite toys and decreased tolerance of other dogs and people. In extreme cases the bitch may develop signs of guarding and aggression.

False pregnancy symptoms usually resolve spontaneously after a few weeks and can be suppressed more quickly with medication. Spaying however, will prevent recurrent episodes occurring.

### Prevention of pyometra

Pyometra is a serious infection of the uterus (womb); this term is literally translated to 'pus in the uterus'.

It is most commonly seen in older bitches but can occur after any season. This is a life-threatening condition requiring emergency treatment, usually involving surgery to remove the septic uterus before the body succumbs to toxic shock.

Pyometra is usually seen a few weeks after heat. Signs may include vomiting, increased thirst but poor appetite, a swollen and painful abdomen, and foul-smelling cloudy vaginal discharge.



## What are the downsides to spaying?

Bitches are undoubtedly more prone to gaining weight following spaying. However, this can be controlled by feeding an appropriate good quality diet and giving adequate daily exercise.

Bladder neck weakness (urinary incontinence) can occur in any dog but is more common in spayed bitches. This can lead to leaking of urine whilst lying down. Weight control reduces the risks of this occurring and the symptoms can be controlled with medication in the majority of cases.



## When to spay your bitch

Surgery during heat is a high risk due to the increased blood supply to the uterus. Spaying should also not be performed whilst symptoms of false pregnancy are present. Therefore, the best time to spay is usually about three months after a season has finished.

There is much debate as to whether to spay before or after the first heat, and many factors must be taken into consideration. Each case is reviewed individually so please contact your vet for advice on this subject.