

GETTING YOUR PET DESEXED

WHAT IS DESEXING?

The terms “*desexing*” or “*neutering*” describe the surgical procedures performed on animals to stop them from breeding. In males this involves the surgical removal of the testicles. This is referred to as “*castration*”. In females, the surgery involves the removal of the ovaries and uterus – a procedure known as an ovaro-hysterectomy or “*spay*”.

As well as stopping unwanted breeding, there are many good reasons to have your pet desexed. But if you are unsure, we recommend you first read our leaflet entitled “*Should I get my pet desexed?*”

It is quite safe. Macarthur Vet Group we use the best possible anaesthetic, surgical and pain relief techniques to ensure the safety and comfort of your pet.

When should my pet be desexed?

We generally recommend that dogs and cats be desexed at 5-6 months of age (females before their first season). There is no maximum age, so it's never too late, but there are definite advantages to having it done at this age.

We can also desex other species including rabbits and ferrets, and there are good medical reasons for doing so.

ANAESTHESIA AND PAIN RELIEF

All desexing operations require a brief stay in hospital and a general anaesthetic. We take numerous precautions before and during the anaesthetic to ensure your pet's safety.

The first thing we do is examine your pet to ensure that it is safe to give the anaesthetic. This is very important. There may also be other tests we need to do, or things we need to know about your pet (see reverse).

Next a mild sedative is given. This calms your pet and reduces the dose of anaesthetic needed later. Before the surgery a strong analgesic (pain reliever) is given. This will be effective throughout the surgery, and during recovery.

We clip a small amount of hair off the front leg and apply antiseptic to the skin. If you have elected this option, a catheter will be placed so that we can give intravenous (IV) fluids during the surgery. The anaesthetic drug is also given intravenously (into the vein). Within a few seconds, this makes your pet go to sleep, relaxes their muscles and stops them from experiencing any pain at all. We then put a special tube (ET tube) into their trachea (windpipe) and connect them to a machine that delivers oxygen and precise amounts of anaesthetic gas to keep them asleep. The patient is monitored by a trained nurse and monitoring equipment. The gas level can be adjusted if necessary.

During recovery, a second analgesic injection is given, that provides ongoing pain relief for the next 24 hours.

THE SURGERY

Naturally the surgical procedure itself differs for males and females, and it is also a bit different for cats versus dogs. In each case, the skin is shaved and cleansed using 3 different types of antiseptic to prevent infection. The surgeon scrubs his hands and uses a specially prepared kit of sterile surgical instruments, drapes, gloves and surgical clothing.

This section describes the actual surgical procedures, so if you don't want all the details, turn the page now!

Male Cats – Castration

Male cats are the simplest animals to desex. The hair is shaved from the scrotum and surrounding skin. A very small incision is made in one side of the scrotum, the testicle is removed, and the blood vessels and spermatic cord are tied. Then the same procedure is repeated on the other side. There is very little bleeding and no sutures. We only need to use injectable anaesthetic (no gas) and a few simple surgical instruments.

Male Dogs – Castration

In dogs, the incision is made just in front of the scrotum – the scrotum itself is not cut. Each testicle in turn is pushed forward out of the scrotum and the sheath around the testicle is cut. The testicle is lifted out, clamped, and broken away from the surrounding sheath. The blood vessels and spermatic cord are tied with dissolving sutures, and then cut so that the testicle can be removed. Once both testicles have been removed, the tissues under the skin are stitched back together using a layer of dissolving sutures. The final layer of sutures is placed in the skin.

Female Dogs and Cats – Spay

The abdomen is clipped and sterilised, and a small incision is made just behind the umbilicus (belly button), cutting first through the skin and then the muscles underneath. Either a small finger or specially shaped hook is inserted, and just by feeling, one side of the uterus can be lifted out through the incision. Each ovary is then carefully broken away from its attaching ligaments, and the blood vessels are clamped and tied using dissolving sutures. The fatty tissues are separated from the uterus, and the base of the uterus is also clamped and tied. The uterus and ovaries are removed, and the sutures are checked carefully for leakage. Finally, three layers of stitches are used to securely close the wound - first a row of dissolving stitches in the muscle, then another layer under the skin and then the skin sutures. Suture materials are chosen according to species and size, to give maximum strength with minimum tissue reaction.

At the end of the surgery, the 'gas' is turned off, and eventually the oxygen is turned off too and the ET tube can soon be removed. Our vets and/or nurses will then continue to monitor your pet until they have woken up.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

Some preliminary things to consider:

- *Are your pet's vaccinations up to date?*
They should be - preferably before coming into hospital
- *Do you want pre-anaesthetic blood tests for your pet?*
This can detect problems that our examination can't such as liver and kidney disease or blood disorders. It is particularly important in older animals. For young animals, there is much less risk, but it is still a worthwhile precaution. If in doubt, ask us for advice.
- *Is there anything else to be done at the same time?*
This may be the ideal opportunity to catch up on other things such as nail clipping, microchip implantation, heartworm tests, teeth cleaning or vaccinations. All of these can be done whilst your pet is asleep and blissfully unaware! Some of them are even cheaper if we do them while your pet is being desexed!

Before the surgery:

- Book-in at least a few days in advance.
We usually do desexing operations Monday-Friday
- Make sure your pet gets nothing at all to eat after 7 pm the night before, and no water after 7am on the day.
- Bring your pet in at the appointed time on the surgery day (usually between 8:30 & 9:30am, but later in the morning, or the night before is OK if you prefer).
- Leave a telephone number where you can be contacted.
- Make sure you tell us about any health problems your pet may have, including any recent minor illnesses.

After the surgery:

Please heed the following advice from your pet. After all, they've had a big day, and need some special attention! →



WHAT DOES IT COST?

As you can see, there is a lot involved in performing a desexing operation – and making sure it's done properly! Still, we keep our prices competitive. The actual costs vary according to the species, sex, size and age of the pet. Males (especially cats) are cheaper than females. For females, the procedure is similar for cats and dogs, but the difficulty and the time taken varies with the animal's size – so does the cost. It also costs a bit more if she is already pregnant, in season or very overweight. Confused? Please phone us for a quote! If we know your pet's weight, we can tell you exactly how much it will cost. The cost includes the examination, anaesthesia, IV fluids, pain relief, surgery, hospitalisation and suture removal. It does not include the blood tests or other optional things mentioned at the start of this page. Remember that the costs of desexing are partly offset by the discounts given on registration fees for desexed pets.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

If you would like more information about desexing, or about any of the other issues discussed in this leaflet, please phone us, or come in and discuss it in person. Remember that we also have another leaflet "**Should I get my pet desexed?**" that discusses the advantages and disadvantages of desexing.

AFTER THE SURGERY

- Telephone the hospital after 3pm.
I'll probably want to come home tonight, but I might still feel a bit drowsy and may have to stay overnight.
- I can have some water, and probably a small meal tonight.
- Have a quiet, safe, warm, dry place for me to come home to.
I might still be a bit groggy, and need to sleep it off!
Don't leave me outside if it's too cold
Don't let me climb stairs or walk beside the pool.
I should be fine by tomorrow. If not, give the vet a call.
Extra pain relief can be given (but it is usually not needed).
- Don't let me bite the stitches or lick them too much.
If I can't resist then you may need to get me a special collar from the vet.
- Check my wound each day for any redness, swelling or discharge. A little bit is normal, but if your worried, call the vet.
- I'll need to rest a bit, so no rough games or strenuous runs for 10 days. I can still go on short walks though.
- I shouldn't get my stitches wet, so don't bath me (unless I get really dirty and smelly!)
- After 10 days, I'm ready to get the stitches out, so make an appointment and take me back to the vet.