

# Desexing your pets

**We strongly recommend desexing male cats and dogs (castration) and female cats and dogs (spay) at 6 months of age. There are many reasons why vets recommend desexing.**

- **To maximise life span** – desexing helps prevent mammary tumours, pyometra (infected uterus), prostate disease, testicular cancer, and helps prevent some hormone related diseases.
- **To prevent unwanted pregnancy**
- **To prevent seasons** – ie bleeding and attracting neighbourhood dogs. Palmerston City Council prohibits females on heat to venture outside their own boundaries.
- **To reduce unwanted behaviours** – such as inter-dog aggression, dog-people aggression, dog and cat dominance and territory marking with urine.
- **To help prevent wandering and roaming**
- **To reduce council costs** – cheaper registration and lower “bailing out of jail” costs
- **To reduce the incidence of territorial cat fights** – and therefore the incidence of cat bite wounds and abscesses
- **To help reduce the stray cat and dog population** – helps to reduce the number of animals that have to be put to sleep in shelters.

**Please note that there are a few false ideas about desexing.**

- **Females will get fat** (weight gain is actually caused by overfeeding or under exercising)
- **Females should have a season or litter before being desexed** (there is no evidence that this benefits either cat or dog)
- **Males will be small** (their size is actually genetically pre-determined)
- **Desexing will change their personality** (your pet will still be the same cat or dog that you love, but some socially unacceptable behaviours may improve)

## Common questions about desexing...

### “Will desexing affect my pet’s personality?”

*Your pet will retain their pre-operation personality, possibly with the added bonus of being calmer and less aggressive.*

### “Should my female have one litter first?”

*No – it is actually better for her not to have any litters before being spayed. Her risk of developing breast cancer increases if she is allowed to go through her first heat.*

### “Will it cause my pet to become fat?”

*Your pet’s metabolism may be slowed due to hormonal changes after desexing, however this is easily managed by adjusting feeding and ensuring adequate exercise. There is no reason a desexed pet cannot be maintained at a normal weight.*

### **“Is desexing painful?”**

*As with all surgery, there is some tenderness immediately after the procedure, but most pets will recover very quickly. We administer pain relief prior to surgery and after surgery too. Your pet will be discharged with a short course of pain relief medication to take at home for the first few days after the surgery. In many cases, your pet will likely need some encouragement to take it easy!*

### **“Will my dog lose its “guard dog” instinct?”**

*No, your dog will be just as protective of their territory as before the surgery.*

## **Considering desexing your pet? ...**

- Make a booking for your pet's operation by calling us on 8931 0455.
- If your pet is a dog, wash them the day before surgery as they are unable to be washed until after any stitches are removed and the wound has healed
- Do not give your pet food after 8pm the night before the operation and do not give them any water on the day of surgery.
- The vet will perform a thorough physical examination before administering an anaesthetic. To ensure your pet is as comfortable as possible, all pets receive pain relief prior to desexing, and medication to take home for a few days after the procedure.
- Keep your pet restrained and quiet when they have been discharged, as the effects of anaesthetic can take some time to wear off completely
- Keeping them quiet is also essential to allow the wound to heal.
- Food and water should be limited to small portions only on the night after surgery.
- Follow any dietary instructions that the vet has provided.
- Ensure all post-surgical medications (if any) are administered as per the label instructions.
- Ensure your pet's rest area is clean to avoid infection.
- Check the surgery site at least once a day for any signs of infection or disruption (eg. bleeding, swelling, redness or discharge). Contact the vet **immediately** if these symptoms appear. Do not wait to see if they will spontaneously resolve.
- Prevent your pet from licking or chewing the wound. Special cone-shaped collars assist with this problem. A single chew can remove the careful stitching with disastrous effects.
- Ensure you return to us on time for routine post-operative check-ups and removal of stitches.

**If you have any further questions about desexing and how best to care for your furry family members, the vets and nurses at University Avenue Vet Hospital are here to help – just call us on 8931 0455.**