

Laparoscopic Ovariectomy (Keyhole spay)

Neutering is usually recommended in bitches for a number of reasons.

- Prevention of unwanted litters of puppies
- Prevention of pyometra – a life threatening infection of the uterus
- Reduces the incidence of mammary cancer

However, neutering can sometimes cause other problems such as hair coat changes, weight gain and urinary incontinence and it is important that you discuss the pros and cons of neutering with your vet before arranging a keyhole spay.

Neutering can be done before the first season or at least 3 months after the last season. If the bitch is pregnant or having a false pregnancy, you must wait until she is back to normal before being spayed. You should discuss this with your vet and you should have your bitch checked over before referral for a keyhole spay to check there is no milk production.

Keyhole spay is carried out via three small incisions in the midline of the abdomen. In the vast majority of cases only the ovaries are removed. This has all the same advantages of a conventional spay (no seasons, pyometra or false pregnancies), but without having to make a large incision.

Bitches will come home the same day and will have painkillers for a few days after the operation. They should be kept restricted and on a lead for 3-4 days after surgery, but can be treated normally after this. Do not allow her tummy to get wet or muddy for 10-14 days after surgery until the incisions are fully healed. You must not let her or other dogs lick at the stitches.

Owners of giant breed bitches (Great Danes, Mastiffs, St Bernards etc) may wish to consider having a laparoscopic assisted gastropexy performed at the same time as the spay. While this procedure does not prevent 'bloat' it should prevent the stomach from twisting (GDV or 'gastric torsion') which is a potentially fatal surgical disease and is common in large and giant breed dogs. We would strongly recommend this in bitches that have had a first degree relative suffer from a GDV.

The fees shown are set fees which include the anaesthetic, consumables and surgery, but does not include any painkillers that are dispensed. If there is a complication or we advise that for some reason we cannot do the surgery via a keyhole incision (for example if there is an unexpected finding in the abdomen), then there may be further charges. We would call you to discuss the reason for this and give you an estimate.

Uncomplicated umbilical hernias can be repaired at the same time for a small extra fee.

As we are a busy hospital and accept emergency referrals from other vets every day of the week, very occasionally we may have to cancel elective surgeries at short notice if another case needs the operating theatre urgently.

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What to expect

We will contact you following a request from your vet to organise a laparoscopic ovariectomy. You need to make sure that it is more than 3 months since her last season and she is not due for a season imminently. If you have any questions about the long term effects of neutering, you should discuss this with your vet.

On the day, please make sure your pet has not had anything to eat since the night before. She can have free access to water. Take her for a walk before you come so that she has a chance to urinate and defaecate.

We will receive your pet's clinical history from your vet, and the surgeon and anaesthetist who will carry out the procedure will see the history and examine her. If we notice anything that might make the procedure more dangerous (such as a heart murmur or a skin infection) we will contact you before we start the procedure.

All surgical procedures under anaesthetic carry a risk of complications, including minor problems such as clipper rash or wound complications, infection or death. You should read the consent form carefully when you sign it.

An intern or nurse will admit your pet in the morning and the surgeon will call you after the procedure. As this is not a referral, you will not meet the surgeon. Your pet will be discharged with written post op care instructions by an intern or nurse later the same day.

During the procedure we will inspect the ovaries and uterus, but we do not specifically check any other organs in the abdomen. This is also the situation in a conventional spay.

You will take your dog back to your vet for post op check ups, we do not need to see her again unless your vet is concerned.

Laparoscopic ovariectomy leaves the uterus in the abdomen. There is no data to suggest that this is a long term problem unless your dog has to be treated with progestogen therapy in which case she could develop an infection in the uterus, but this would be a very rare situation.

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