

Dog neutering during Covid-19 lockdown

Overview

- During Covid-19 lockdown, your veterinary practice might not be able to offer routine procedures such as neutering.
- Staying entire (unneutered), puts your puppy/dog at a higher risk of pregnancy, and in the long term raises the chance of certain health problems and undesirable behavioural traits.
- A female dog can have her first season, mate and get pregnant any time from 5-6 months old.
- **Even dogs that are related will mate.**
- Keep unneutered dogs on the lead and away from others until they are neutered.

Can I have my dog neutered during lockdown?

During lockdown, UK vets are prioritising the sickest pets, which means that in most circumstances, routine procedures such as neutering will not be possible during this time (this may vary between practices).



The British Veterinary Association (BVA) and Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) have asked vets across the UK to provide urgent/essential treatment only and to maintain social distancing at all times. This will mean a delay in routine procedures

such as neutering and [vaccinations](#), but will enable vets to continue treating the sickest pets whilst protecting the general public, veterinary staff and NHS. Once your vets are running a full service again, get in touch to arrange for your dog to be neutered.

Risks of being unneutered

Pregnancy

- Pregnancy is the most obvious risk of being unneutered.
- Female dogs can get pregnant when they are in season (on heat), and **any unneutered dogs can mate, even if they are related**, different breeds or very different sizes.
- Your puppy will have her first season anytime between 5-18 months old and then again every 6 months.

Illness

- Spaying and castrating has many health benefits and unneutered pets are at a higher risk of developing conditions such as [pyometra \(womb infections\)](#), false pregnancy (females) and in time, for male dogs prostate problems.

Unwanted behaviours

- There are certain behaviours that can develop in unneutered dogs that can be quite difficult for pet owners to deal with.
- In some circumstances, unneutered dogs may show aggression towards other dogs and sometimes humans.
- Both male and female dogs can develop sexual behaviours such as 'humping', which is natural but sometimes disruptive, especially if they hump people or other pets.

Keeping your unneutered dog safe

Female

- Keep her separate from **all** unneutered male dogs while she is in season/on heat. Signs of a season include:
 - A swollen vulva (private parts)
 - Bloody or straw colour discharge from the vulva

- Being more open to male attention
- Licking the vulva
- Peeing more frequently
- If she is in season, keep her on the lead during walks.
- Monitor for signs of illness including:
 - [Pyometra \(womb infection\)](#)
 - False pregnancy

Male dogs

- Keep away from unneutered females in season.
- Monitor for any signs of problems with peeing/pooing and the penis or testicles.

Both my female and male dog are unneutered, what shall I do?

If you have an unneutered male and unneutered female dog, keep them separate whilst your female dog is in season. Keep them in separate rooms and don't allow them to play together - it only takes a very short time for dogs to mate. Your male dog will be very motivated to get to your female when she is in season, keep him distracted and make sure he is safe and secure while they are apart.

My dog has accidentally mated, what should I do?

During lockdown, your veterinary practice is likely to be offering a limited service, if your dog has accidentally mated, contact your vet to discuss your options.

My dog is humping all the time, what should I do?

There are lots of reasons why dogs start to hump. It can sometimes be due to hormones, but it can also be due to excitement or habit. Many neutered dogs still hump. If it's becoming a problem, the best thing to do is distract them from doing it. **Never tell your dog off for humping, it's a natural behaviour that can be discouraged and ignored, but not punished - they simply won't understand.**

- **Quietly and gently** move him/her off whatever he/she is humping.
- Once they have calmed, reward them with a treat or toy.
- If your dog continues to hump, quietly and gently put him/her into another room for a minute or two (to calm down).
- Then call him out and reward him/her for doing a trick such as 'sit', 'paw' or 'lie down'. This will distract him/her and encourage more 'favourable' behaviours instead of humping.

You might also want to find other ways to help your dog use up his/her energy, for example scattering food round the house, or training him to do some new tricks. Contact your vet for advice if your dog's behaviour is causing a serious problem.

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