**SAY NAY 2 SPAY?**

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Canine Health

*What if...you could enjoy the benefits of spaying and neutering without the drawbacks?*

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As breeders and owners of dogs, all of us have dealt with the issue of spay/neuter at some point in our history in the fancy. Whether it’s advising new puppy owners on recommended timing if such surgery is to be performed or it’s making the decision, as a breeder, to have the procedure performed yourself, there are many theories on what might be the best time to have it done.

For every article promoting the positive effects of putting off the procedure (such as,

[*http://www.caninesports.com/uploads/1/5/3/1/15*](http://www.caninesports.com/uploads/1/5/3/1/15) *319800/spay\_neuter\_considerations\_2013.pdf*

You’ll find another that argues against that position (*http://www.columbusdogconnection.com/Documents/PedRebuttal%20.pdf* ).

An article that fairly examines both sides of the issue can be found in the February 2013 issue of the magazine *Whole Dog Journal* (*http://www.whole-dogjournal.*

*com/issues/16\_2/features/risks-benefits-spayneuter-your-dog\_20685-1.html*)

But, what if youdidn’t have to worry about negative effects of earlyspaying or neutering? What if there were proceduresthat would allow you to enjoy the benefits ofspaying or neutering without the drawbacks thathave been cited in many studies similar to thosecited above over the past few years?There are.

What follows is an overview of an article published on the website [*http://healthpets.mercola.com*](http://healthpets.mercola.com), a site founded and maintained by Dr. Karen Becker. This is taken from an interview Dr. Becker recently conducted with Dr. Michelle Kutzler, an expert in animal reproductive physiology. Dr. Kutzler has developed spay procedures that preserve the ovaries in bitches and a companion surgery for males using injections to accomplish the neutering. In both cases, the goal is to perform an effective procedure without the side effects that typically accompany this surgery.

**OVARY-SPARING SURGERY**

Dr. Kutzler’s procedure is referred to simply as a hysterectomy, as it removes the uterus but leaves the ovaries intact. In many ways, the surgery is not dissimilar to the currently popular routine surgery which removes both the uterus and the ovaries (an ovariohysterectomy). Alternative surgeries similar to the procedure developed by Dr. Kutzler have been used for years in European countries where the pressure to spay/neuter has never approached what we’ve seen in this country. In fact, in several Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Sweden,

Norway and Finland), spaying or neutering is prohibited by law unless deemed medically necessary.

Their rationale is based on over 10 years of study which have shown time and again the importance that the ovaries play in the overall health of a bitch. Many studies have shown that early removal results in a significant increase in the occurrence of certain cancers (hemangiosarcoma & osteosarcoma) among bitches that were spayed early on.

Dr. Kutzler first began working on this procedure when she began to see so many recently- spayed bitches being brought in suffering from urinary incontinence. The only viable option for treating this issue was a drug know commonly as DES (diethylstibestroil). The problem with DES is that a dog’s bone marrow is sensitive to the effects of estrogen, so DES had to be administered very carefully to avoid lost production of bone marrow. Dr. Kutzler has performed many such surgeries and has created a video of the procedure for use by any veterinarian who wishes to learn the technique. But, even she admits that it may be a while before we see Vet schools including instruction for this procedure as they routinely do for learning to perform an ovariohysterectomy. She is working with the AVMA to let her begin teaching the procedure at conferences put on by this professional organization.

It is important to point out that a bitch receiving this surgery is still going to go through her regular estrous cycles. In that sense, it does not prevent her from being attractive to a male. So, the normal procedures should be followed to keep any intact males away from such a bitch even though she is unable to conceive.

**NON-SURGICAL STERILIZATION IN MALES**

Let’s move on to the males. There is a parallel procedure that is much less invasive and much less traumatic for the dog. It is also performed with much greater frequency than the procedure for bitches described above. It involves intratesticular injections to accomplish the sterilization. I know this sounds awful, but read on. There is a drug now on the market called Zeuterin, a zinc based solution which is injected directly into the testicular area. It can be completed on any dog over 3 months of age. General anesthesia is not required and it can be completed in many cases without further chemical intervention.

The only downside is that the shots involve some pain in that area, but not the type of pain that you might expect. It’s caused by the presence of the additional fluid from the drug which tends to build up pressure inside the area and is a very temporary situation. The liquid causes a degeneration in the area where germ cells (cells that will become sperm cells) are manufactured. Basically the result is an inability to continue to create sperm cells rendering the dog incapable of reproducing without the usually associated loss of testosterone. The cells which produce this hormone are unaffected by the procedure.

The second procedure is a vasectomy. This is a much more difficult surgery than the typical castration. Much like ovary-sparing surgery in bitches, it is not a common procedure and it is not, at this time, part of the standard veterinary school curriculum. I believe there is ample evidence out there that early traditional spay/neuter procedures are more harmful to our dog than they are helpful. I hope this article has shed light on some new ways to approach safer sterilization procedures for our dogs.