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Orchidectomy

Neutering, castration

Affected Animals:

Young dogs may tolerate the surgery better than older dogs, but dogs of any age can have this procedure performed safely if the appropriate precautions are taken.

Overview:

Orchidectomy, or neutering, is a procedure that is performed on many male dogs. There are ethical reasons, as well as behavioral and medical conditions, that warrant this surgery. Although an orchidectomy requires general anesthesia, it is a short and simple procedure. Most dogs will return to their normal behavior by the following day. Nevertheless, they will need to have their activity levels reduced for the week following surgery; a rest period will allow the incision to heal properly.

Most veterinarians will discuss the benefits of neutering during one of the initial puppy visits. Because of incorrect "old wives' tales" about neutering circulating in the public, many new owners feel hesitant about this surgery. However, the veterinarian can dispel many of these myths and discuss any other specific concerns.

Description:

Techniques for neutering vary slightly depending on the position of the testicles. If the testicles are located in the normal position within the scrotum, an incision is made in the skin just above the scrotal sac. The testicles are pulled out of the incision and the spermatic cord is ligated or tied off with suture material. The spermatic cord is then cut, examined for bleeding, and allowed to return to its normal position inside the incision. Both testicles are removed through a single incision. The incision is sutured closed and the dog is kept rested during recovery.

If the testicles are not in the normal location, the veterinarian will try to locate them by palpation. The testicle can be anywhere from inside the abdomen to within the tissues leading to the scrotum. If the testicle is located under the skin along the ventral abdomen, the incision is made just above it. The remainder of the surgery is performed similarly to the procedure described above. With an abdominally located testicle, an incision into the abdomen is made, avoiding area blood vessels. The testicle is connected to certain structures by the vessels and ductus deferens of the testis. Once the abdominal testis is found, the structures can be tied off so that the testis can be removed. In older dogs with a retained testicle, the removed testis should be submitted to a pathologist to be evaluated for cancer.

Prognosis:

The prognosis is good. Possible complications include bleeding at the surgery site,

bruising and swelling, infection, and self-induced trauma caused by the dog's licking the incision. If complications arise, they should be addressed by the veterinarian for treatment and correction.

Pre-procedure Care:

The veterinarian should perform a preoperative examination to assess the patient's overall health. Older dogs should have bloodwork and possible chest x-rays taken prior to the procedure so that any underlying diseases can be identified and addressed.

Post-procedure Care:

The dog should be kept rested for seven days following surgery, and prevented from licking the incision. Outdoor dogs should be kept indoors until healed. For seven days following the procedure, dogs should be leashed while walking outside. Running, jumping, and climbing stairs also should be discouraged during the healing process. Owners should check the surgery site daily to detect any complications.

Prevention:

It is recommended that dogs be neutered at a young age to reduce the possibilities of anesthetic risks and complications of surgery. The procedure can be tolerated by older dogs, but preoperative tests and monitoring are advised.