

# The Pros & Cons of Sterilizing my Dog

The FBAG is often asked by members when they should sterilize their Frenchie or if they should sterilize their pet at all. Here, we will go through the benefits and the side effects of sterilizing your Frenchie.

## Reasons to Sterilize you Pet

- Sterilizing a young bitch prevents most mammary cancers—spaying a bitch before her first season reduces her chances of developing mammary cancer 200 times compared to intact females. Mammary cancer is the most common single type of cancer in intact bitches.
- Sterilizing completely prevents problems with the uterus such as pyometra and uterine cancer—pyometra is a serious infection of the uterus, which is usually expensive to treat and can often be fatal. It is relatively common problem in intact bitches, especially after being in season. Uterine cancer is relatively rare in dogs but is also expensive to treat and often fatal. Other diseases such as tumors, cystic ovaries, mastitis, ovarian cancer, uterine torsion and vaginal prolapse will also be eliminated.
- A sterilized animal will never produce an unwanted litter—breeding French Bulldogs is not for the faint-hearted when it comes to the cost and adverse health effects on the bitch. Many healthy dogs are killed every year in pounds across Australia and the FBAG was specifically set up to avoid lost, unwanted or unclaimed French Bulldogs being euthanized. In addition a pure bred French Bulldog is easier to re-home than a French Bulldog cross bred animal of dubious parentage.
- Intact females are in season for two to three weeks at a time, usually twice a year—during the time a bitch is in season it is impossible to even walk her on a leash. Intact males will be seeking her out, and may even try to mate with her while you are on walks. It will not be safe to leave her inside a fenced yard during these times, since both intact males and females will dig under or climb fences to find love. While an intact female is in season, she will be spotting blood all over the house, unless she wears protective pants, (they do not provide contraceptive protection). She also may be anxious and frustrated during this time. Females will have to be separated from intact male housemates. Some owners will “crate” their bitch during this time. Intact male housemates will cry, bark, howl, whine and scratch at the crate to get at the bitch, driving all members of the household as crazy as the male dog! Consequently many owners will send their bitches or males to kennels for the duration of the season, adding to the cost of ownership plus missing your pet for periods of time.
- Castration prevents most prostate disease in male dogs
- Castration decreases aggression problems—aggression problems are most common in intact male dogs, including dominance aggression. Castration can be a part of treating aggression problems. Around 50% to 75% of dogs will show an improvement in aggression. Bear in mind castration is only a part of treating aggression and will not replace training.
- Castrated males are less likely to roam, to mark furniture or practice other objectionable sexual behaviours—this occurs when males are castrated prior to puberty however this may lead to other health concerns in the future. See point 2 below
- Castration prevents testicular cancer—testicular cancer is the most common cancer of the male reproductive tract.
- Sterilization tends to increase an animal’s overall lifespan by approximately 2 years.

## Points against Sterilization

- dogs may gain weight after being altered—it is true some animals may tend to gain weight after being sterilized however, it is you who feeds them and you who controls the amount of exercise they receive.
- Altered dogs may be taller than intact dogs— dogs that are sterilized before they have reached full maturity may be taller than they would be if they had been left intact. Sex hormones influence the end of bone growth after puberty. Since sex hormones never arrive in dogs that have been sterilized the bones tend to continue growing for longer than the intact dog. In fact sterilization prior to dogs reaching sexual maturity increased the risk of some cancers and musculoskeletal disorders in both males and females.
- Sterilized dogs may become incontinent—this is more common in females and can be controlled with medication
- Sterilized dogs are more likely to have problems with hypothyroidism—once again more common in females and can be treated with supplements
- Bitches who are aggressive before being spayed may become more aggressive after being spayed—sex hormones release chemicals that also affect mood, so removing chemicals that affect mood may make an aggressive bitch more so. However an aggressive bitch prior to or after spaying should be trained and socialised to curb aggressive behaviors.
- Sterilization, especially spaying of females, is an invasive surgery—this is a valid concern of owners of French Bulldogs with their flat faces, breathing issues and complications related to anaesthesia. However, owners take a proactive approach by asking their vet about their experience with flat-faced breeds and if yours is the first, find a vet with experience.
- The size of external genitalia may be smaller in dogs who are sterilized before puberty— This may be a problem for dogs predisposed to urinary tract blockage and spaying can increase the risk of urinary tract infections, vaginal dermatitis and vaginitis especially in females spayed prior to puberty.

In conclusion, pets that are sterilized do make a household pet easier to live with. Many vets promote early sterilization to avoid unwanted puppies however getting your pet sterilized just after puberty may have more beneficial outcomes for French Bulldogs. With a little more vigilance from responsible owners having an intact male or female for a few more months should not pose too big a problem.

**Next Issue—Myths about Sterilization and the True Cost of Breeding Dogs.**