

THE ADVERSE HEALTH EFFECTS OF EARLY SPAY AND NEUTER IN GOLDEN RETRIEVERS

Most of us are bombarded with messages about taking the socially correct actions and that includes early spay and neuter of our dogs. *But we need to be aware that early spay and neuter can leave dogs with their long-term health impaired and in the case of Golden Retrievers, it significantly increases the likelihood they will die of hemangiosarcoma, one of the most common types of cancer in Golden Retrievers.*



In Sweden spaying and neutering is against the law, under the animal cruelty ordinances. It is a very uncommon practice in Western Europe and yet there is no animal overpopulation problem in those countries. The reason is responsibility. Puppies are produced either because people breed dogs on purpose, whether or not they should be doing so. Or we get puppies from accidental breedings because owners were not knowledgeable or did not pay attention. Since you are reading this website we assume you are responsible and are trying to learn about how to best acquire and care for a Golden Retriever.

How Did We Get Here?

How did we get to this place where it is socially preferable to subject our dogs to invasive surgeries that leave them less healthy than just to be responsible for their behavior? There are a tremendous number of people who get their dogs from shelters and unlike responsible hobby breeders, the shelters cannot screen who is allowed to take their dogs. We know that in California 47% of the dogs adopted from shelters end up back in the shelters. So in that case it is appropriate to help society, even as it hurts the long-term health of the dogs, by making sure all shelter animals are altered before they are adopted.

What Does The Science Say?

For a long time there was no research done on this. Dogs were altered, they lived, no one followed sets of altered and unaltered dogs until recently, when medicine for dogs has become a profitable business. The **only** side by side study of effects of early spay and neuter was done by Canine Companions for Independence. CCI would like to alter their trainee puppies as soon as possible to make life easier for their puppy raisers. CCI found that animals altered early could not be used as service dogs because of behavior issues.

Nature gave animals endocrine glands for the same reason people have them. They play a large part in behavior and physical development, the rate at which bones develop, the size of the dog and how the dogs behave. It is only in the last ten years that veterinary medicine has been profitable enough to fund the studies that are not being done, most of which provide surprising data on early spay and neuter. There are a number of attachments on this subject, some more technical than others. I would urge you to read at least the one by Christine Zink, DVM. See the bottom of the page.

Many uninformed people and veterinarians would probably tell you that six months of age is the optimum time. But there is absolutely no research to support this. Your veterinarian probably attended a vet school before this research was available. And they may have attended a school supported by HSUS (Humane Society of the United States). HSUS* promotes early spay and neuter without regard for the health of the

dogs but even they no longer promote mandatory spay and neuter.

What About Golden Retrievers Specifically?

If you are considering a Golden Retriever, we assume temperament and behavior matters to you. If you have not considered Golden Retriever rescue, they have some wonderful dogs. If you feel you need to know more about the breeding, health and temperament of a potential family pet, that may be why you are at this website. And if you are wanting a Golden that looks like the dogs on this website, let me assure you that a *Golden Retriever puppy that is altered early will have longer legs, less bone, a narrow and longer muzzle, be a couple inches taller and not resemble its littermates. It will NOT look like the dogs you are seeing here.*



Benefits

But let's start with the benefits of early spay and neuter and there are some. Bitches that are spayed prior to their first season will not develop mammary cancer and not get pyometra. Dogs that are neutered have no testicles and therefore no testicular cancer. These are all low-incidence events and usually easily treated surgically.

Risks

Females

Urinary incontinence.

Increased barking and aggression toward people and dogs.

The likelihood of getting hemangiosarcoma (a non-treatable cancer that is the most common cancer in Golden Retrievers) is increased by 5 times.

Tripled the risk of hypothyroidism.

If done before one year increases the risk of osteosarcoma.

Increases the risk of orthopedic disorders, possibly including hip dysplasia.

Recurrent urinary tract infections.

Increases the risks of adverse reactions to vaccines.

Increases the risk of obesity by 1.6 - 2 times.

Males

Quadruples the small risk of prostate cancer.

Increased barking and aggression toward people and dogs.

The likelihood of getting hemangiosarcoma is increased by at least 1.4 times.

Tripled the risk of hypothyroidism.

If done before one year increases the risk of osteosarcoma.

Increases the risk of CCL injuries.

Significantly increases the risk of orthopedic disorders, including hip dysplasia.

Tripled the risk of obesity.

Increases the risks of adverse reactions to vaccines.

Increases the risk of geriatric positive impairment.