

SHOULD I GET MY FERRET SPAYED/CASTRATED/VASECTOMISED?

The RSPCA strongly advises that you do not breed from ferrets, as it is very difficult to find good homes for the young. The best way to ensure that ferrets do not breed is to have them neutered.

Neutering your pet is important for a number of very good reasons. For female ferrets it can literally be a life and death choice. It will prevent unwanted litters of kits, as well as reducing the incidence of antisocial behaviour and quite a number of common diseases and infections. This fact sheet aims to outline some of the reasons why we neuter ferrets. Please feel free to discuss your options with the vet or nurse if you are unsure whether to have your pet neutered

Male Ferrets (Hobs)

Male ferrets can be castrated or vasectomised from 5 months of age onwards. A castrated hob loses most of the characteristic smell, will live with other ferrets and is quieter (as a rule) to handle. The best age to have them neutered is between 7 and 8 months when they have matured. Neutering a hob is a quick operation and most hobs go home from the vets the same day. Note - It can take up to six weeks for the musky odour to reduce and if the hob was in season the same time for him to accept living with other ferrets.

The other option is to have your hob vasectomised. The main reason that people choose to do this is if they have a number of jills and do not wish to breed them - a vasectomised hob can be used to take them out of season. A vasectomised hob has the same characteristics as a full hob. He will have the musky odour and may not tolerate other ferrets well.

Monorchids/Cryptorchids. In some hobs one or both testicles fails to descend properly into the scrotum at birth. This is thought to be largely a hereditary condition, and therefore affected animals should not be bred from (and cannot be shown). Retained testicles have a high risk of becoming cancerous and we therefore recommend that all monorchid and cryptorchid animals should be castrated.

Female ferrets (jills)

Female ferrets (jills) should be neutered because they can get a serious disease called APLASTIC ANEMIA. This is a **common cause of death** of unsplayed, non-breeding females. This condition occurs when high levels of oestrogen are produced during the "heat" cycle and suppress the production of red and white blood cells in the bone marrow. Advanced cases are irreversible and death occurs from the severe anaemia and secondary bacterial infections that set in.

Any jill that is not going to be used for breeding should be spayed before her first oestrus (usually around 6 or 7 months of age).

Female ferrets come into season (a time when they can get pregnant) from early spring until September. If you keep female ferrets, they will become sexually mature at about eight months old, and you should seek expert advice on their care before this stage.

Neutering of any animal may slightly reduce its metabolic rate and therefore reduce its food requirement to maintain a normal body weight. Careful attention to diet will prevent excessive weight gain and is important to your pet's health. We are happy to advise on the optimum diet for your pet. Please feel free to ask a vet or veterinary nurse about your pet's diet. We also hold free "Nurse Clinics" on most afternoons

where your pet's weight can be monitored and diets can be discussed with our nurses who are qualified nutritional advisors.

What is involved?

When you book your pet in for his/her operation with the receptionist, you will usually be asked to come in for a **pre-op check**, so that a vet can examine your pet and find out if he/she is ready to be castrated / spayed. Once the vet is happy that your pet is healthy, you can book in for the operation. You will be asked **not to feed** him/her after 7am on the day of the operation, and to remove the water bowl at the same time. This is important as a full stomach increases the risk of your pet being sick when coming round from the anaesthetic, which can be dangerous. You will be asked to bring your pet to the surgery between **8am and 8.30am** on the morning of the operation. You will be asked to read and **sign a consent form**. Please read this carefully and ask about anything you are not sure about. We also offer **micro chipping** while your pet is under anaesthetic at a reduced cost.

A veterinary nurse will admit your pet provided that a pre op check has taken place. If your pet has shown any signs of being unwell in the recent past or has any allergies to medication, then please bring this to his/her attention. A nurse will then take your pet through to the hospital area where he/she will be weighed and given a pre-med injection. This reduces any anxiety and allows a smoother transition into and out of anaesthesia, as well as providing postoperative pain relief. Your pet is then bedded down in our kennels until he/she is ready for the operation. A general anaesthetic is administered which causes the animal to fall asleep within a few seconds. A nurse monitors the anaesthetic throughout the operation, and once the operation is over your pet is kept on oxygen until he/she starts to wake up, which takes only a few minutes. Your pet will be given a pain relieving injection and returned to kennels where he/she is given a comfy bed and is monitored until fully conscious.

Patients in for routine operations are usually allowed home the same day, but occasionally they will need to stay overnight if they are still sleepy from the anaesthetic. Your pet may be sent home with an Elizabethan collar to prevent them from interfering with the wound. We ask owners to bring their pets in for a post op check with the nurse 2-3 days following surgery, and a second check up at 10-14 days to check the wound and remove any non-dissolvable stitches. There are no extra charges for these check-ups.

Further information

If you would like any further information about ferrets please feel free to talk to one of the vets or nurses at the practice.

The British ferret club has lots of information on their website:

<http://www.britishferretclub.co.uk/>