

## Surgery Doesn't Have To Be Scary

**Many elective procedures provide health benefits to your beloved pets. These surgeries are planned ahead of time and not done on an emergency basis. While surgery of any kind can sound scary, these are routine procedures that present minimal risk and provide benefits of prolonged health to your pet.**

Some common elective surgeries that may be advised by your veterinarian include:

### **Ovarioectomy/Ovariohysterectomy/Castration**

More commonly known as a spay or a neuter, these procedures involve the surgical removal of reproductive organs. "Unless a cat/dog/rabbit is going to be used for breeding purposes, there is no need to keep your pet intact," says veterinarian Dr. Karen Choptain. "There are some circumstances in which anesthesia is NOT advised for a patient. A veterinarian would advise an owner if their pet was healthy to undergo this routine surgery."

Despite many misconceptions and objections, having your pet spayed or neutered will:

- Improve the pet's disposition
- Decrease the risk of cancer
- Decrease or eliminate the risk of pyometra (a life threatening infection of the uterus)
- Decrease roaming
- Help to reduce pet overpopulation
- Decrease behavioural marking
- Increase the longevity of your pet
- Eliminate the challenges of a female in heat

These are commonly day procedures, meaning the pet goes home the same day. Patients are monitored during anesthesia and pre-anesthetic blood work is advised to help ensure overall patient health.

### **Dewclaw Removal**

Dr. Choptain advises: "if the dewclaws on your dog's front or rear paws seem to easily get caught on things, then they could easily rip off. You should talk with your vet about having the dewclaw(s) removed."

This procedure is often suggested when a dog is to undergo a spay/neuter procedure. It is mostly performed on the hind dewclaws. Not all dogs have dewclaws. Most dewclaws are attached to the limb via muscle and bone. In cases where the hind dewclaws do not have bone, they can be quite loose and mobile.

### **Dental Cleanings/Extractions**

Dental disease is one of the most common medical conditions in our pets. An early indicator of dental disease is bad breath. When pets are examined for their annual physical, your veterinarian will check your pet's mouth. Your vet is looking for signs of periodontal disease, gingivitis, and cavities. Dental disease in pets can lead to blood born bacteria resulting in cardiac disease, renal disease and complications with diabetes, not to mention pain and discomfort in your pet's mouth.

Just like with people, a professional dental cleaning allows for cleaning below the gum line, scaling and polishing of the teeth, and extraction of diseased teeth or repair, if needed. Often your pet may also require dental x-rays that can help to expose disease below the gum line.

Dr. Choptain cautions her clients about considering "cheaper" options: "despite what you may have read, hand-scaling performed by groomers or at home can be dangerous to your pet. It does not remove plaque below the gum line and

often leaves microscopic ridges in the teeth which allows for faster accumulation of plaque and tarter.” Only a veterinary team member should perform dental procedures on pets.

### **Growth Removal**

Owners will often find lumps or bumps on their pets. Your veterinarian will evaluate the growth and advise if removal is necessary. Removal of a growth may be because it is invasive, fast-growing, infected, is displaying discomfort to your pet, or may appear to be cancerous in nature.

Removal of any abnormal growths will benefit your pet as it may help to decrease the risk of infection and potentially remove cancer. Even growths made of fat (lipomas) can grow to large sizes that can cause discomfort or affect mobility of your pet. Removal of growths when they are small will decrease potential complications of a larger surgical site later.

### **Orthopedic Surgeries**

More often seen in dogs, bone injury, damage or disease may require surgical intervention. Common examples of this are cruciate rupture and hip dysplasia. While these are not emergent surgeries, Dr. Choptain suggests: “if left untreated, symptoms such as severe arthritis, pain and affects on mobility may occur. Your veterinarian will discuss all options with you, including possible surgical procedures.”

The risk of anesthesia may outweigh the benefit of surgery for your pet. Your veterinarian will always have your pet's best interest in mind.

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### **About Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association**

The Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association is the regulatory and professional organization for the veterinary profession in Manitoba. We are an independent, non-profit entity that is dedicated to the excellence of the veterinary profession.

Legislated by the Province of Manitoba’s Veterinary Medical Act, the MVMA is supported by its over 700 veterinarian and veterinary technologist members. We advocate for animal health, we grow public awareness of veterinary medicine and we keep our members informed and connected to national and international veterinary communities.

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