

Desexing Your Pet

Making the Right Decision for Your Individual Pet

Desexing is one of the most common surgical procedures performed in veterinary medicine.

It can provide important health, behavioural and lifestyle benefits, but modern research suggests that the ideal timing may vary depending on your pet's breed, size, sex and lifestyle.

There is no "one-size-fits-all" answer.



1 WHAT IS DESEXING?

Desexing prevents reproduction by surgically removing the reproductive organs.

- ✓ Prevents unwanted litters
- ✓ Helps reduce pet overpopulation
- ✓ May improve management of some hormone-driven behaviours
- ✓ Eliminates heat cycles in females
- ✓ Prevents several reproductive diseases

DID YOU KNOW?

Modern veterinary recommendations increasingly focus on individualised desexing plans rather than a single recommended age for every pet.

2 HEALTH BENEFITS OF DESEXING

FEMALE PETS

- ✓ Prevents pyometra (life-threatening uterine infection)
- ✓ Reduces risk of mammary cancer
- ✓ Prevents unwanted pregnancy
- ✓ Eliminates heat cycles

MALE PETS

- ✓ Prevents testicular cancer
- ✓ May reduce some prostate diseases
- ✓ May reduce roaming and fighting behaviour



3 BEHAVIOURAL & LIFESTYLE BENEFITS

-  Prevents accidental litters
-  No seasons or bleeding in females
-  Reduced roaming and marking in many males
-  Easier management in multi-pet households
-  May reduce some forms of hormone-driven aggression

4 POTENTIAL DOWNSIDES

-  **JOINT & GROWTH CONCERNS**
- Early desexing may increase the risk of:
- Cruciate ligament rupture
 - Hip dysplasia
 - Elbow disease (particularly in some large and giant breeds)

-  **CANCER RISKS**
- Research suggests some cancers may occur more commonly in certain breeds following early desexing. Examples include:
- Lymphoma
 - Hemangiosarcoma
 - Mast cell tumours
- The effect varies significantly between breeds.

-  **OTHER POSSIBLE EFFECTS**
- Increased obesity risk
- Urinary incontinence (especially females)
 - Potential behavioural changes in some individuals
 - Possible increased risk of feline lower urinary obstruction in male cats

5 EARLY VS DELAYED DESEXING

✓ **EARLY DESEXING**

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- ✓ Prevents pregnancy sooner
- ✓ Reduces mammary cancer risk
- ✓ Prevents pyometra
- ✓ Stops heat cycles earlier

POTENTIAL DRAWBACKS

- May increase orthopaedic disease risk in some breeds
- May increase risk of certain cancers in some breeds

VS

✓ **DELAYED DESEXING**

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- ✓ Allows normal hormone-driven growth
- ✓ May reduce orthopaedic disease risk
- ✓ May reduce risk of some cancers

POTENTIAL DRAWBACKS

- Ongoing pregnancy risk
- Ongoing hormone-driven behaviours
- Increased pyometra risk in females
- Mammary cancer risk increases with multiple heat cycles

6 WHEN SHOULD MY DOG BE DESEXED?

DOG TYPE	SUGGESTED TIMING
 Small Breeds (<10-15 kg)	~6-9 months
 Medium Breeds	~9-12 months
 Large Breeds	~12-18 months
 Giant Breeds	~12-24 months
 Females (general)	Individualised
 Males (general)	Individualised

DID YOU KNOW?

Large and giant breed dogs often benefit most from delaying desexing until skeletal maturity.

7 WHAT ABOUT CATS?

Early desexing is widely accepted and considered safe.

Most cats are desexed between:

 **4-6 MONTHS**

Benefits include:

- ✓ Prevention of unwanted litters
- ✓ Reduced roaming
- ✓ Reduced spraying
- ✓ Prevention of pyometra
- ✓ Reduced shelter overpopulation

Current evidence suggests delaying desexing offers fewer proven benefits in cats compared with dogs.

8 KEY TAKEAWAYS

-  Desexing provides important health benefits
-  Timing should be tailored to the individual pet
-  Breed, size, sex and lifestyle all matter
-  The benefits outweigh the risks for most pets
-  Preventing unwanted litters remains critically important

WHY DESEXING MATTERS TO THE COMMUNITY

Every year thousands of healthy dogs and cats enter shelters due to accidental litters.

Responsible desexing helps:

- ✓ Reduce pet overpopulation
- ✓ Improve animal welfare
- ✓ Reduce shelter burden
- ✓ Improve long-term outcomes for companion animals

 Your decision makes a real difference.



OUR RECOMMENDATION

There is no one-size-fits-all answer. We recommend a personalised desexing plan based on:



Please speak with our vets – we're happy to help you decide the best timing for your individual pet.

