

Castration of Male Dogs

Ronald M. Bright, DVM, MS, DACVS

Purpose of Procedure

Castration is performed in dogs to

- Reduce overpopulation and unwanted dogs
- Decrease male aggressiveness and roaming behavior
- Decrease the incidence of undesirable urination behaviors
- Reduce diseases of the prostate and possible tumors of the perianal area
- Help prevent the occurrence of perineal hernias in the older male (or recurrence of a hernia following surgical hernia repair)
- Prevent, eliminate, or remove tumors involving the testes or scrotum
- Repair traumatic wounds when surgery may not be able to preserve the scrotum or testes
- Repair hernias involving the scrotum
- Alleviate or prevent obstruction of the urethra from bladder stones (as a component of prescrotal urethrostomy surgery)
- Control certain hormonal (endocrine) abnormalities
- Prevent propagation of puppies that might inherit certain defects or diseases

Description of Technique

Castration, or *orchietomy*, is surgical removal of the testicles. For dogs with both testicles in the scrotum, a single incision is made in the skin just in front of the scrotum. If one or both testicles are located in the abdomen (retained testicle or cryptorchidism), abdominal exploratory surgery is necessary. If the testicle is located near the sheath (prepuce) or in the groin (inguinal testicle), a skin incision is made directly over the testicle.

Most castration incisions are closed with buried sutures to decrease the tendency for licking. These sutures do not have to be

removed. Scrotal ablation or removal of the entire scrotum (at the same time as the testes) is necessary in cases of cancer, trauma, or infection or if the scrotum is extremely pendulous (large and baggy).

Preparation of Animal

Your veterinarian will instruct you to withhold food and sometimes water for a certain period of time, depending on the anesthesia to be used for the surgery. Most dogs undergoing an elective castration are healthy and require minimal laboratory testing. If castration is done as part of therapy for another disease, more involved diagnostic tests may be done prior to castration.

Potential Complications

Most dogs do well after surgery, with no or minimal complications.

- Excessive licking requires some type of restraint device, such as an Elizabethan collar, to prevent trauma to the incision.
- A small amount of bloody fluid may collect within the remaining scrotal sac and usually disappears within 2 weeks. Rarely, a more significant amount of fluid accumulates and a second surgery is needed to remove the scrotum.
- Not all dogs castrated for roaming or behavioral problems show significant improvement after castration.

Postoperative Follow-up Care

The dog should be kept quiet for 10-14 days or until the sutures are removed, especially if an abdominal surgery was done. Restrict play and exercise to leash walking. If possible, except for going outside for elimination purposes, the dog should be kept inside in a clean and dry environment until the incisions have healed. No recheck visits may be needed if external sutures were not used.