

# To Breed Or Not To Breed – That Is The Question

*By Brenda Howard*

You have the BEST dog in the world. Or maybe the second best. . . Anyway, you have a great dog and she's just beautiful and you are probably thinking that she would make an even better dog if she's had a litter of puppies. Or you've got a good dog that shows fine prospects for hunting and you don't want to ruin him by removing his "drive" through neutering. Or "I paid good money for this dog and I'm going to make some of it back by breeding her selling the pups." Well, I'm here to tell you that none of these are good reasons to breed.

Let's look at the top 10 most asked questions about breeding and sterilization

**Question:** *Won't my pet get fat and lazy if he's neutered?*

**Answer:** Pets gain weight for the same reason most of us gain weight – too much food and not enough exercise! Spay or neuter is not the cause of obesity in dogs.

**Question:** *Won't my female be a better pet if she has a litter?*

**Answer:** No – there is no scientific evidence that having a litter will change the personality of a female dog for the better or worse.

**Question:** *Should I wait until my dog is over a year old to spay or neuter?*

**Answer:** Medical evidence shows that females spayed before the first heat cycle are typically healthier. They are at a lower risk for certain cancers and illnesses including mastitis and pyometra. Males are less likely to experience prostate cancer and avoid testicular cancers. Many veterinarians now sterilize dogs and cats as young as eight weeks of age. In 1991, after careful evaluation of scientific data, the American Humane Association endorsed early spaying and neutering of puppies and kittens. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) quickly followed suit and believe the practice to be a safe, effective tool to help end pet over population.\*

**Question:** *Don't you think every child should witness the miracle of birth?*

**Answer:** Even if children are able to watch a pet giving birth—which is unlikely, since it usually occurs at night and in seclusion—the lesson they will really learn is that animals can be created and discarded as it suits adults. A better experience for your children will be the example you set of the quality of care and lifetime commitment you make to your family pet.

**Question:** *My dog is a purebred – doesn't that mean I should breed him?*

**Answer:** Estimates are that one out of every four pets brought to animal shelters around the country are purebred.\* Thousands of pure bred dogs are euthanized each year. There are more than enough purebred dogs. "Purebred" is not an indication of quality. AKC, UKC or any other registration is simply that—a registration – a number. It is not a seal of approval or quality. Only individuals who have studied their breed, competed in showing for conformation points, or in sport competition, and have done proper health clearances on their dogs really understand how to breed for the optimum chances of producing healthy and correct breed specimens.

**Question:** *If I neuter my dog will he lose his instinct to protect my house?*

**Answer:** Spaying or neutering does not affect a dog's natural instinct to protect home and family. A dog's personality is more dependent on genetics and environment than on sex hormones.

**Question:** *Won't my dog feel less male if he's neutered?*

**Answer:** Dogs, unlike humans don't have any concept of sexual identity or ego. Neutering will not change a dog's basic personality. He doesn't suffer any kind of emotional reaction or identity crisis when neutered. A neutered dog may be less inclined to initiate fights with other males over the "ladies" and be

less inclined to roam in search of the female in heat living up the road.

**Question:** *My dog is truly special and couldn't I get another just like her if she breeds?*

**Answer:** Your dog may be a great pet, but that doesn't mean her offspring will be a carbon copy. In fact, an entire litter of puppies might receive all of a pet's (and her mate's) worst characteristics.

**Question:** *Isn't it really expensive to spay my pet?*

**Answer:** The cost of spaying or neutering depends on the sex, size, and age of the pet, your veterinarian's fees, and other factors. But whatever the price, spay or neuter surgery is a one-time cost—a relatively small cost when compared to all the benefits. It's a bargain compared to the cost of having a litter and ensuring the health of the mother and litter; two months of pregnancy and another two months until the litter is weaned can add up to significant veterinary bills and food costs if complications develop. Some veterinarians will work with you to create a payment plan for the surgery. If you cannot afford the price your veterinarian quotes, check for low cost spay/neuter clinics in Denton, Wichita Falls, Fort Worth, and Dallas – just remember to consider the costs of gas and your time.

**Question:** *How hard can it be to find homes for my cute puppies?*

**Answer:** If you really care about these puppies, you will be very choosy about the new homes. As a responsible breeder you will insist on the following minimum requirements of your new homes:

The dog must be kept in a secure yard with a fence or dog run

The dog must sleep indoors with the family at night (clearly house training is required!)

The dog should be spayed or neutered.

The dog should have regular veterinary care including vaccinations and heart worm preventative.

Most importantly you should be willing to take any puppy back, if at any time in the future, the new owners are no longer willing or able to keep the dog.

Please be responsible and spay and neuter your pets. If you decide you want to breed your dog, learn as much as you can about your chosen breed through the AKC or UKC and by joining the local or regional breed club. Learn about the good and bad qualities of the breed – ie known health issues or temperament concerns. Perform all the suggested health tests on the dam and sire so that you can be proud of the puppies you bring into the world.

*\* Information from the Humane Society of the United States*

*Brenda Howard has been training dogs for over 20 years and is a member of The Association of Pet Dog Trainers, The American Bloodhound Club, and The American Boarding Kennels Association. Brenda and her husband, Walt Partin, are owners of BlooMoon Pet Resort LP.*

