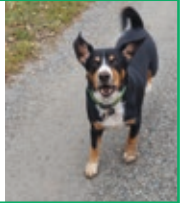


**Health Tips & Tails**

*Health Tips & Tails is compiled by the Health & Genetics (H&G) Committee*

**If you have something to howl about we want to hear from you!!** Please send your own “Tips and Tails” you would like to see mentioned in this column to [health@nemda.org](mailto:health@nemda.org). (Less than 700 words please.)



**Setting the Timetable for Sterilizing Pets – Literature Review**

*by Lauren Little*

As a follow up to the “When to Spay/Neuter Your Entlebucher” article in the May 2022 Entlebook, NEMDA’S Health and Genetics committee found an additional veterinary article discussing the positive effects that waiting to spay and neuter can have on our dogs. We know this is an important and often debated topic, so we are summarizing this paper here, to keep the Entlebucher community up-to-date on this issue. We will continue to research this topic as new information becomes available, in order to provide our Entlebucher-loving community with the most up-to-date information.

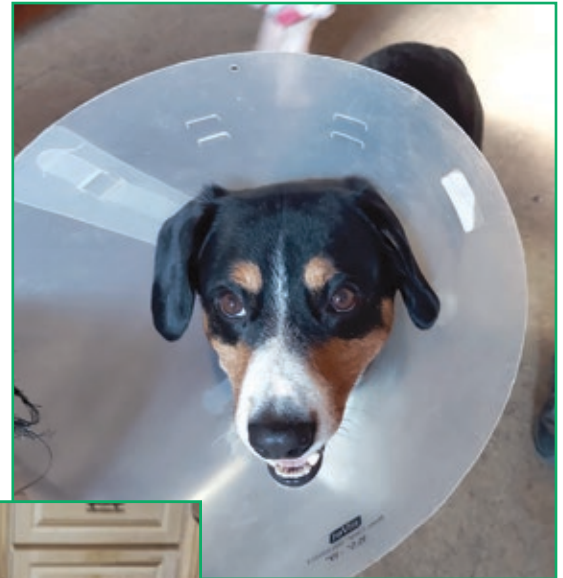
**The article we found was “Setting the timetable for sterilizing pets” by Joan Capuzzi, VMD. It was published in dvm360, June 2021, Volume 56. To read it yourself, go to <https://www.dvm360.com/view/setting-the-timetable-for-sterilizing-pets>.**

The article states that there has been a shift in veterinary care recommendations about spaying and neutering pets. In the past, responsible pet owners were expected to spay or neuter their cat or dog before the first heat cycle, around five-six months of age. However, new research suggests that long-held beliefs about these decisions may not be so straightforward.

The paper begins with a few basics – accepting that sterilization procedures and anesthetics are generally safe for pets as young as three months of age, but the larger the size of the animal, the safer the procedure.

Sterilization stops reproduction and removes estrogen and testosterone from the young animal’s body. In an intact dog, estrogen and testosterone signal the growth plates to close in the bones when growth is complete. Early spay or neuter freezes the joint development at an earlier stage of development, which may result in less well developed joint structures. Removing the hormones can therefore delay closure of the growth plates and lead to greater joint instability. Similarly, total bone volume is reduced without continued hormonal influence. Sterilization also affects metabolism, often leading to obesity.

In conclusion, with a few exceptions, early spay or neuter may be beneficial without increased health risk in small breed dogs. However, in dogs that are considered medium or large breed, such as the Entlebucher, delaying the spay or neuter procedure until they are fully grown, 18-24 months, is thought to have significant benefits.



*These NEMDA members’ Entlebuchers are showing off their post-surgery outfits.*