POSTER
BEHAVIOURAL MEDICINE
RESEARCH

Influence of gonadectomy on canine behavior

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In veterinary practice, surgical sterilization of dogs is one of the most common surgical procedures performed and it has been considered for decades to be a routine standard for the prevention of numerous undesirable behaviours, medical conditions, and diseases. This study aims to evaluate the effects of gonadectomy on dogs' behaviour over time.

The study was carried out on 156 clinically healthy dogs (78 control group and 78 experimental group balanced for gender). Dogs' owners were asked to complete an initial questionnaire (time 0). A follow-up questionnaire, including dog's demographic information and behavioural history, as well as information on the dog's physical and social environment, was sent at 10 days, 1, 3, 6 and 9 months after the first examination.

Answers of the questionnaire revealed that no change was found between time 0 and 9 months in both groups of dogs for eating and drinking behaviours, exploration, grooming, chewing objects, destruction, excessive barking, pica and coprophagy. No difference was found also for inappropriate elimination in the house and repetitive behaviours. In the experimental group sleeping behaviour increased significantly ($p \leq 0,05$) over time, while no change was observed in the control one. Owner aggression, pull on a leash, roaming behaviours decreased significantly in the experimental dogs between time 0 and 9 months ($p \leq 0,05$), while only a tendency was detected for inter-dog aggression.

Our work diverges with some previous findings. More research is needed to contribute to the debate regarding whether and how gonadectomy can affect behaviour.