

- desexed male dogs are unlikely to develop the very common prostate diseases which can be fatal (approximately 60% of entire dogs develop prostatic disease);
- desexing greatly reduces the incidence of fighting in cats and so reduces abscesses and infections including Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (sometimes referred to as Feline AIDS) which is spread by biting;
- reducing the tendency of both desexed dogs and cats to roam reduces the likelihood of the animal being injured or killed in road accidents.

Why vaccinate dogs and cats?

Prevention by vaccination is the best way to protect your pet from a range of diseases. Dogs and cats are affected by a number of viral infections:



Dogs

Canine Distemper
 Canine Hepatitis
 Canine Parvovirus
 Canine Cough



Cats

Feline Immuno-deficiency Virus (sometimes referred to as Feline AIDS)
 Feline Respiratory Disease (sometimes referred to as Cat Flu)

These diseases are not transmissible to humans. Treatment for these diseases may be possible, but the success rate can be low. The most effective form of protection is vaccination, which enables dogs and cats to fight infection by stimulating their immune systems so that they make their own anti-bodies against the viruses. To maintain this protection, they must be vaccinated regularly so that the level of immunity is always high enough to prevent disease. Most boarding kennels, catteries and veterinary clinics require dogs and cats to be properly vaccinated before admission to protect both the incoming animal and those already within the facility. **Responsible pet ownership includes Desexing and Vaccination.**

Australian Veterinary Association
 Victorian Division

together with the

Municipal Association
 of Victoria

Municipal Association of Victoria
 www.mav.vic.gov.au

**Cat and dog reduced fee
 desexing voucher scheme**

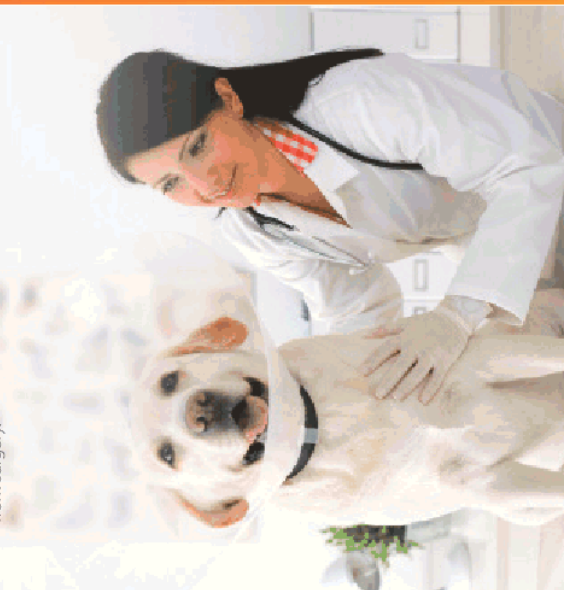
Fees
 A schedule of the reduced fee desexing voucher scheme is available from AVA (Victorian Division), the participating local veterinary practitioner in your municipality, your local Council, or from the Municipal Association of Victoria.

Introduction

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA), together with local councils have developed a scheme providing low income pet owners with a reduction in the cost of desexing, i.e. spaying and castration of cats and dogs. The scheme aims to ensure that everyone in the community has access to the desexing procedure for their animals. It is hoped that through the promotion of desexing there will be a decrease in the numbers of unwanted puppies and kittens. Desexing also leads to a range of medical and behavioural benefits. These positive aspects of desexing are discussed later in this brochure.

How councils and the AVA provide discounts

Under the Scheme, the veterinary practitioner discounts their advertised fee by 25% to the customer. The issuing council then pays a set amount directly to the veterinary practice on receipt of the veterinarian's account. The pet owner pays the remaining amount of the desexing fee directly to the vet, either on admission for or discharge from surgery.



How the scheme operates

- Councils participating in the scheme offer desexing vouchers to low income earners who live in the municipality.
- Pet owners who hold one of the following concession cards (issued by Centrelink) are eligible:
 - Pension concession card
 - Health care card
 - Low income health care card
 - Commonwealth seniors health card
- Council will need to be shown the concession card so that details can be recorded on the voucher.
- The owner presents the voucher to the veterinary practitioner **at the time of admission** for desexing and pays the remaining fee direct to the veterinary practitioner after a discount of 25% by the veterinary practitioner.
- The veterinary practitioner takes the voucher, signs it, and bills the council for the prescribed fee.
- The vouchers carry an expiry date of one month from the date of issue by the council.
- Only vouchers issued by council can be used to access the scheme. Pet owners who falsify a voucher will have to repay council and the veterinary practitioner the discounted fee.
- Under law, all cats and dogs over 3 months old must be microchipped and registered with council.

Special conditions

- Desexing of the animal will only take place if the owner provides the veterinary practitioner with proof that the animal has been vaccinated. Many veterinary practitioners may be willing to give discounted fees for vaccinations as part of the scheme.
- A maximum of two vouchers (for 2 dogs, 2 cats or 1 dog and 1 cat) will be issued per household.

Why councils support this scheme

1. **Population control**
 Desexed animals cannot breed and therefore cannot add to the increasing number of strays and unwanted animals. Councils support the desexing scheme in order to promote responsible pet ownership.
2. **Behavioural changes**
 Both male and female cats and dogs show significant behavioural benefits from being desexed. Castrated males are less likely to roam (90% stop), or to urinate within the property (50% stop). Castration does not always completely eliminate the sex drive or ability to copulate, but castration does stop mounting behaviour in 60% of dogs. There is a reduction in aggression toward other male dogs (60% stop fighting), and a reduction in dominance behaviour, making dogs more manageable. The presence of testosterone slightly increases aggressive tendencies in general. The loss of that hormone also tends to reduce aggressive behaviour towards people, reducing the risks of attacks, especially on the owner's family and other people in the community. In females, desexing prevents oestrous (on heat) behaviour and problems of attendant male dogs creating a public nuisance. Once behaviour problems have developed, it can take six months after desexing until behavioural improvements are seen, so desexing before unwanted traits develop is recommended. Desexed pets are less likely to be a problem to councils and the community than undesexed pets.

Medical benefits of desexing

The appropriate age of desexing your pet should be determined after discussions with a veterinary practitioner.

- There are significant medical advantages for both sexes:
- female dogs cannot develop serious uterine infections which are common in older undesexed female dogs;
 - early desexing (before the first season) greatly reduces the risk of female dogs developing mammary cancer (breast cancer) which can be fatal in 50% of cases