



Western Australian Division

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5<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Janet Knowles  
Shefferluka Laradoodles  
PO Box 5350  
Rockingham Beach, WA, 6969.

Dear Ms Knowles,

Thank you for your letter, dated 7<sup>th</sup> September 2015, directed to AVA WA regarding the requirement of the Labradoodle Association, that all pet puppies are sterilised at seven weeks to protect the breed.

Firstly, the AVA committee members are saddened to hear that one of your puppies developed complications following surgery with the resulting loss of a kidney. We hope the puppy is doing well and is back to full health.

Your experience is precisely why the AVA Policy on early age desexing falls short of endorsing mandatory desexing by a particular age. The AVA and veterinarians are focused on animal welfare, and the decision about when to desex a particular dog or cat must be made with the welfare of the individual animal as the primary factor.

The AVA's position is that the attending veterinarian is the best person to advise the client about the timing of desexing, using their professional judgment to take into account all the different factors that pertain to the health and welfare of the animal.

The relevant sections of the current AVA Policy on the age to desex are reproduced below:

**Guidelines regarding the age to desex**

For general veterinary practice, where dogs and cats are already owned, the AVA believes veterinarians should exercise their professional judgment of the appropriate age for desexing individual cats or dogs.

For animal shelters, the AVA acknowledges that the age to desex animals in these institutions is influenced by commercial and legislative factors, but overriding these should be the same principles that refer to the animal's best welfare. This decision is made after assessing all the relevant factors, such as current vaccination status, weight and health of the cat or dog, so as to act in the best interest of the animal.



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Veterinarians should ensure that all necessary precautions are taken to minimise the risks of anaesthesia, surgery, stress and infection to animals when undergoing these procedures, especially for the very young ('paediatric') and/or small (body weight) animals.

The appropriate age for desexing will vary with individual cases and thus the age of desexing cannot be specified for all dogs and cats collectively.

Veterinarians must retain their professional discretion to determine the appropriate age of desexing based on present and future scientific evidence of the long-term effects of early desexing.

The very fact that you found it difficult to find a veterinarian who would consent to perform routine sterilisation on pet animals at seven weeks of age shows how seriously veterinarians take their responsibility on this question.

In a situation where the commercial factors (protection of breed bloodlines) are competing with animal welfare factors (safety/risk of a surgical procedure) veterinarians and the AVA will be much more focused on the welfare of the patient.

I hope this explains the profession's collective view on this matter. I trust that this information may be of assistance in your discussions with the breed association about mandatory early age desexing.

Yours faithfully,

Richard A Read, BVSc, PhD, FANZCVS  
Vice President, AVA Western Australia.