

IMPLICATIONS FOR DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS OF DIFFERENT PROFILE PRODUCTS: UNITED KENNEL CLUB

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The first all-breed dog registries were established in the late 1800s – licensed dog events soon followed. The breeding status of dogs participating in events has always been regulated by event rules. For the first 90 years, there were two primary types of events: dog shows and hunting trials. Because the premise was to evaluate breeding stock, spayed and neutered dogs were ineligible to compete. Some registries still maintain that premise. (Intact females in estrus may participate in dog shows, which are on-leash events, but may not participate in off-leash competitions such as field trials).

There has been a surge in new events referred to as “performance events” over the past 25 years. Performance competitions, such as obedience, agility, and dock jumping, are tests of training, athleticism, and temperament instead of standardized beauty. During this time, United Kennel Club introduced seven performance events, all of which allow spayed and neutered dogs to participate, and conformation classes for altered dogs. While UKC registered dogs are only a slice of the pure-bred dog population, participation is significant. There were 16,427 UKC dog events held in 2012. Entries ranged from 40 to 2,000 dogs per event. Spayed and neutered purebred dogs are eligible to compete in 15,536 of these events and cross-bred altered dogs are eligible to compete in 1,331.

While performance events and the spay/neuter movement both gained traction in the 1990’s, research has yet to establish a correlation in timing. There is no doubt, however, that there is far more interest in events for altered dogs in the past 20 years than in the 90 that preceded them. At the same time, there is heightened concern among these thousands of event participants regarding health issues being linked to the most common forms of spaying and neutering. For example, a recent UC Davis study compared an intact population of Golden Retrievers to spayed and neutered Golden Retrievers. The study reveals that early neutering increases the occurrence of hip dysplasia, cranial cruciate ligament tear and lymphosarcoma in males and cranial cruciate ligament tear in females. Late neutering was associated with the subsequent occurrence of mast cell tumors and hemangiosarcoma in females. Other studies have raised similar concerns.

These health concerns, combined with the growth of UKC performance events for spayed and neutered dogs, have strong potential to raise interest in economical, healthy, and non-invasive methods of sterilization.