

# Vets unsure of single-shot dog sterilization

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A single-shot sterilization injection for male dogs is the first of its kind to be approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Some local veterinarians, however, say the shot's potential adverse side effects may outweigh its cost-saving benefits.

"If you're looking for an economical way to try to sterilize a large population of animals, then yes, Zeuterin is a way to do that, but you have to be willing to accept the adverse effects that go with it," Dr. Ronald Lott of Appleby Sand Road Animal Clinic said. "The frequency of complications is the same between surgical versus chemical castration, but the morbidity is typically much more severe with the injectable than it is with the surgical."

Zeuterin is an injectable sterilization compound first patented in 2003 to serve as a cheaper alternative to surgical neutering. The original five-year patent ran out in 2008 before Zeuterin was picked up and re-patented by Ark Sciences of New York. Infections or complications a dog's body undergoes from reactions to the compound's chemicals could potentially end up costing a pet owner more than they had planned. "A certain percentage of those dogs are going to have to end up having wound care or have a surgical procedure because of the degree of inflammation and infection that happens," Lott said. "Compared to the numbers of complications that we have with the traditional neuter procedure, the big issue (with Zeuterin) is the degree of pain and wound management that would end up costing way more than the castration would." Surgical castration requires a small incision be made in the skin and the testicle removed. Recovery time is minimal, Lott said, and dogs are often "standing on their hind legs ready to sniff for a squirrel within two hours."

According to the Zeuterin FAQ on Ark Sciences' website, only 1.1 percent of dogs tested saw adverse reactions to the shot. Over 93 percent of the dogs did not show any signs of post-procedure pain. It was developed in part to offer a more cost effective neuter method.

"It is expected to be ready for sale at a price that will allow them to sterilize up to five dogs for the price of one castration (on average), five times faster, and five times safer," according to the website.

What the shot doesn't do is one other downside.

"It doesn't help with behaviors like mounting and aggression," said Dr. Michael Connolly of Connolly Animal Clinic. "All it does is sterilize the dog. That's not the only reason we neuter male dogs. We neuter because when dogs come in heat they dig out of their pen and run off and they want to fight with other males so it's not going to be affective for those kinds of behaviors."

The Nacogdoches Animal Services and Adoption Center works with local veterinarians to offer a low-cost spay and neuter program in an attempt to reduce the shelter's kill rate. Rates are dependent on the size and weight of each animal and can range anywhere from \$25 to \$75.

Though the low-cost program has been ongoing for more than a year, shelter officials say to see any results with low-cost neuter methods may take time.

"The Nacogdoches Humane Society has made a huge investment in those low cost spay and neuters, as has O'Malley PET (Preventing Euthanasia Together), so we have a number of organizations working hard to keep the cost of those spays and neuters down," said Nacogdoches Fire Department Chief Keith Kiplinger. "What we are seeing is people that would be reluctant to have an animal altered are willing to do it when the price is lower. We expect within the next two to three years to see some impact on the number of animals coming into the shelter."

Aside from the low-cost program, which is based on annual income, the Animal Shelter is also offering spay and neuter cost reductions through a Petsmart grant that expires in April. It can only be used by owners in the 75964 area code.

"If you're in that zip code and have a dog that needs to be spayed or neutered, they'll issue a \$65 credit, all you have to do is come in and fill out paperwork," said Capt. Robert Ford. "You'll take your animal to the vet of your choice and they bill back to us." The Nacogdoches Animal Services and Adoption Center can be reached at 936-560-5011.