

# AKC Canine Health Foundation Funded Research Suggests Potential Health Benefits to Dogs When Spay and Neuter is Delayed

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The AKC Canine Health Foundation (CHF) continues to be on the cutting-edge of canine health research with the funding of Dr. Ben Hart's landmark study which evaluates the health implications of early spay and neuter in dogs. Data from phase II of the study which looks at the early spay and neuter implications in Golden Retrievers and Labrador Retrievers as applied to common areas of canine health including joint disorders and cancer suggests that delaying the spay or neuter of dogs until they reach sexual maturity may provide long-term health benefits.

According to Dr. Hart, UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, "We found in both breeds that neutering before the age of 6 months, which is common practice in the United States, significantly increased the occurrence of joint disorders." In addition, Dr. Hart says, "The data, however, showed that the incidence rates of both joint disorders and cancers at various neuter ages were much more pronounced in Golden Retrievers than in the Labrador Retrievers."

"CHF is committed to funding research that will support the evidenced-based practice of medicine," said Dr. Shila Nordone, CHF's chief scientific officer. "Studies like Dr. Hart's help equip veterinarians and dog owners with information to make informed decisions about when to spay or neuter."

To arrive at these conclusions Dr. Hart and his team analyzed 13 years of health records from the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine for neutered and non-neutered male and female Labrador Retrievers and Golden Retrievers between the ages of 1 and 8 years of age. These records included 1,015 Golden Retriever cases and 1,500 Labrador Retriever cases. Among the findings in Dr. Hart's research, Labrador Retrievers are less vulnerable than Golden Retrievers to the long-term health effects of neutering, as evidenced by differing rates of certain joint disorders and devastating cancers.

This new comparison of the two breeds was prompted by the research team's earlier study, also funded by CHF and reported in February 2013, which found a marked increase in the incidence of two joint disorders and three cancers in Golden Retrievers that had been neutered. [Results of the CHF-funded study](#) now appear online in the open-access journal [PLOS ONE](#).

## Related Grants

- [01840: Health Implications of Early Spay/Neuter on Canine Health](#)
- [01488-A: Health Implications of Spay and Neuter: Golden Retriever and Labrador Retriever](#)

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