

Spaying and Neutering Your Pet

What are the advantages of spaying my female dog?

- When in “heat”, the female experiences an urge to escape in order to find a mate. This is eliminated.
- Eliminates the possibility of false pregnancy following the “heat” cycle.
- Prevention of uterine infection (pyometra).
- Prevention of breast cancer. The risk of developing mammary tumors in dogs spayed before the first heat cycle is reported to be 0.05%. The risk goes up to 8% after the first estrus and 26% after the second estrus.
- Prevention of unwanted litters
- Prevention of heat or estrus

What are the advantages of spaying my female cat?

- Once a female cat reaches puberty (around 7 months of age), she will go into “heat” for approximately one week every month until she is mated. During “heat” female cats display unsociable behavior such as loud and persistent crying and rolling on the floor. Such behavior as well as her scent will attract male cats. Spaying will eliminate these problems.
- Spaying removes the risk of uterine cancer and may reduce the risk of breast cancer in female cats.
- Prevention of unwanted litters.
- Prevention of heat or estrus.

What are the advantages of neutering my male dog?

- Reduces the risk of prostate cancer and prostatitis
- Reduces the risk of hormone-related diseases such as perianal adenoma (tumor of the anus)
- Eliminates the risk of testicular cancer
- Removal of sexual urge which results in less roaming behaviors
- Prevention of unwanted litters.
- Prevention or reduction of certain types of aggression or urine marking behaviors.

What are the advantages of neutering my male cat?

- Following puberty, (which occurs at 4-7 months of age) male cats often develop territorial behavior and start to mark or “spray” urine even inside the home. The longer this behavior goes on, the less likely neutering will stop it.
- Intact males often feel the need to increase their territory and wandering farther increases their chances of getting hit by a car or fighting with other males. Cat bites create abscesses and spread diseases such as feline leukemia.
- Prevention of unwanted litters.
- Prevention or reduction of certain types of aggression or urine marking behaviors.

Are there any disadvantages to spaying or neutering?

Most of the perceived disadvantages are false. The most quoted of these are that your pet will become fat, characterless and useless as a guard or hunter. Obesity is probably the most commonly quoted disadvantage of spaying or neutering. Obesity is the result of overfeeding, so by regulating your pet's diet and activity, you can prevent obesity. Spaying/neutering does not cause a change in personality, guarding instincts, intelligence, playfulness or affection.

When should the surgery be performed?

Most veterinarians recommend spaying/neutering between four and six months of age. Recent research has suggested that in some cases, spaying/neutering larger breed dogs at eight to 12 months of age may be beneficial. Since each case is unique, be sure to discuss these options with your veterinarian.

What happens when I leave my pet for this procedure?

Your pet will have a thorough physical examination and any pre-anesthetic blood tests are performed. If the exam and blood work are all normal, your pet is then pre-sedated. An intravenous catheter is then placed to administer anesthetic and provide fluid therapy during the surgery. After your pet is anesthetized, a breathing tube is placed in the trachea to deliver oxygen and gas anesthetic. Once the surgical area is prepped, the spay or neuter is performed. When surgery is finished, your pet is placed in a warm, quiet recovery area and monitored while the anesthetic wears off.

What exactly is done surgically?

For dog and cat spays, an incision is made at the mid-line of the abdomen. The ovaries and Y-shaped uterine horns are clamped, ligated to prevent hemorrhage, and then removed. The incision is sutured closed in three layers. There may or may not be sutures in the skin that need to be removed later.

For dog neuters, a small incision is made just forward from the scrotum. The testicles are clamped and then removed through this incision. The surgeon then ligates the vessels to prevent excess bleeding. The incision is then sutured closed. There may or may not be sutures in the skin that need to be removed later. For cat neuters, a small incision is made in the scrotum, the testicles are removed and the vessels are ligated. The cat neuter incision is small and generally does not require sutures to close it.

What if my male pet has an undescended testicle?

This procedure is more complicated than a routine neuter; the missing testicle can be under the skin along the path it should have descended from or it may be inside the abdomen. Some exploration may be needed to find it thus there is often an incision for each testicle.

Are there any post-operative precautions I should take?

Restriction of activity and monitoring of the incision are the primary post-operative care you should provide. Check the spay incision daily to ensure no redness, excessive swelling or discharge are present. Most pets can resume normal activity 7-14 days after surgery. Until then, leash walks and no running or jumping are the rule.