

Spaying & Neutering



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pet health care, ask your
veterinarian or visit
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Why is it important to spay or neuter my pet?

Your pet is a companion, a friend, and a member of your family. But not all pets are as cherished as yours. In animal shelters throughout North America, four to six million dogs and cats are euthanized each year. Although these figures seem staggering, it's easy to understand when you consider this: If one pair of cats produces eight kittens per year, and each of those kittens then produces an average of eight kittens per year, there are almost 300,000 cats in the "family tree" in year six. In year seven, the descendants of the original mother and father number almost 2.4 million.

For every kitten or puppy that finds a happy home, four others are unwanted, unloved, and possibly neglected or abused. Don't be part of the problem...be part of the solution! Spaying and neutering your pet not only helps reduce the number of unwanted pets, it provides long-term health benefits to your dog or cat.

What is spaying?

Spaying of female dogs and cats, called ovariectomy, is the surgical removal of the ovaries, fallopian tubes, and uterus. Spaying your pet eliminates all heat cycles and the accompanying unwanted bleeding, nervousness, and desire to mate.

Female dogs and cats are often mature enough to reproduce once they reach the age of six to nine months. Female dogs go through a reproductive, or "heat," cycle every six months, usually once in the spring and again in the fall. The cycle begins with proestrus, or "bleeding," prior to the true heat cycle, when the female is receptive to the reproductive advances of males. The entire cycle may be as short as a few days or as long as three to four weeks. Often, female dogs will experience some personality changes during heat cycles, such as becoming short-tempered or anxious.



Female cats enter their reproductive cycles continuously every three to four weeks during certain times of the year, primarily in the spring and fall. They rarely show any signs of bleeding during their reproductive cycles. Many female cats become nervous during these heat cycles and exhibit unusual behaviors, such as rolling on the floor, hiding furtively, or begging for constant attention. They often become quite vocal, too, meowing through their cycles.

Studies show that by spaying your female dog or cat before her first heat cycle, you greatly reduce her chances of developing mammary cancer later in life. Having your female dog or cat spayed will also protect her from uterine infections and difficult or dangerous pregnancies.

Spaying your pet may reduce her metabolism. Consult with your veterinarian to determine if your pet's food intake should be adjusted accordingly.

What is neutering?

Neutering of male dogs and cats, called orchietomy, is the process of surgically removing the testicles. If neutering is done at an early age, it eliminates reproductive behavior.

After they reach sexual maturity at six to nine months of age, male dogs and cats are able to breed any time they are exposed to a receptive female. Unneutered male dogs and cats are prone to wander in search of a female in heat. This means trouble! Pets that wander are more frequently exposed to diseases, and they get injured in fights and traffic accidents much more often.

Male cats are well known to "mark" their territories by spraying odorous urine on furniture, walls, shrubs, etc. Male dogs are sometimes equally anxious to mark their territories. This tendency is greatly reduced when the pet is neutered. Neutering may also reduce aggressive behavior in dogs.

Male dogs and cats benefit from the neutering process in other ways as well. They are less likely to develop prostatic disease and are no longer at risk for testicular cancer and infections.

After neutering, your male dog or cat will continue to have his own unique personality. He will be less likely to roam and will enjoy staying at home more.

Neutering your cat or dog may reduce his metabolism. Consult with your veterinarian to determine if your pet's food intake should be adjusted accordingly.

When should my pet have the surgery?

Generally, veterinarians recommend that a female pet be spayed before her first estrus or heat period (about six months of age). Male dogs and cats can be neutered at six months to one year of age. Under some circumstances, the spay or neuter surgery may be done when your pet is even younger. Your veterinarian will be able to recommend the most appropriate time for your pet's surgery.