

## Is the expense for the surgery really worth it?

Yes! This is a one-time expense that can dramatically improve your pet's quality of life and prevent some frustrations for you. If you are still uncertain whether or not to proceed with the surgery, consider the expense to society of collecting and caring for all the unwanted, abused, or abandoned animals being housed in shelters.



*Having your pet spayed or neutered is a part of responsible pet ownership.*

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# Spaying & Neutering



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## Is there a pet population problem?

Every year, millions of unwanted dogs and cats, including puppies and kittens, are needlessly euthanized. The good news is that every pet owner can make a difference. By having your dog or cat surgically sterilized, you will do your part to prevent the birth of unwanted puppies and kittens and enhance your pet's health and quality of life.

## What about pet behavior and pet reproduction?

Contrary to what some people believe, getting pregnant—even once—does not improve the behavior of female dogs and cats. In fact, the mating instinct may lead to undesirable behaviors and result in undue stress on both the owner and the animal. Also, while some pet owners may have good intentions, few are prepared for the work involved in monitoring their pet's pregnancy, caring for the puppies or kittens and locating good homes for them.

## What is surgical sterilization?

During surgical sterilization, a veterinarian removes certain reproductive organs. If your cat or dog is a female, the veterinarian will usually remove her ovaries, fallopian tubes, and uterus. The medical name for this surgery is an ovariectomy, although it is commonly called "spaying." If your pet is a male, the testicles are removed and the operation is called an orchiectomy, commonly referred to as castration or simply "neutering."

While both spaying and neutering are major surgical procedures, they are also the most common surgeries performed by veterinarians on cats and dogs. Before the procedure, your pet is given a thorough physical examination to ensure that it is in good health. General anesthesia is administered during the surgery and medications are given to minimize pain. You will be asked to keep your pet calm and quiet for a few days after surgery as the incision begins to heal.

## What are the benefits to society of spaying and neutering?

Both surgeries prevent unwanted litters and eliminate many of the behavioral problems associated with the mating instinct.

## What are the benefits to spaying my female pet?

*Female dogs* experience a "heat" cycle approximately every six months, depending upon the breed. A female dog's heat cycle can last as long as 21 days, during which your dog may leave blood stains in the house and may become anxious, short-tempered and actively seek a mate. A female dog in heat may be more likely to fight with other female dogs, including other females in the same household.

*Female cats* can come into heat every two weeks during breeding season until they become pregnant. During this time they may engage in behaviors such as frequent yowling and urination in unacceptable places.

Spaying eliminates heat cycles and generally reduces the unwanted behaviors that may lead to owner frustration and, ultimately, a decision to relinquish the pet to a shelter. Most importantly, early spaying of female dogs and cats can help protect them from some serious health problems later in life such as uterine infections and breast cancer.

## What are the benefits of neutering my male pet?

At maturity (on average, 6 to 9 months of age), male dogs and cats are capable of breeding. Both male dogs and cats are likely to begin "marking" their territories by spraying strong-smelling urine on your furniture, curtains, and in other places in your house. Also, given the slightest chance, intact males may attempt to escape from home and roam in search of a mate. Dogs and cats seeking a female in heat can become aggressive and may injure themselves, other animals or people by engaging in fights. Roaming animals are also more likely to be hit by cars.



Neutering male dogs and cats reduces the breeding instinct and can have a calming effect, making them less inclined to roam and more content to stay at home. Neutering your male pet can also lessen its risk of developing prostate disease and testicular cancer.

## Are there risks associated with the surgery?

Like any surgical procedure, sterilization is associated with some anesthetic and surgical risk, but the overall incidence of complications is very low. Because changes in concentrations of reproductive hormones may affect your pet's risk of developing certain diseases and conditions in the future, your veterinarian will advise you on both the benefits and risks of the sterilization procedure.

## What is the best age to spay or neuter my pet?

Consult with your veterinarian about the most appropriate time to spay or neuter your pet based upon its breed, age and physical condition. Keep in mind that, contrary to popular belief, it is NOT best to wait until your female dog or cat has gone through its first heat cycle.

## Will the surgery affect my pet's disposition or metabolism?

The procedure has no effect on a pet's intelligence or ability to learn, play, work or hunt. Most pets tend to be better behaved following the surgery, making them more desirable companions.

Also, this surgery will not make your pet fat. Feeding your pet a balanced diet and providing regular exercise will help keep your pet at a healthy weight and prevent the health risks associated with obesity. Ask your veterinarian to advise you on the best diet and exercise plan for each stage of your pet's life.