

Spay & Neuter

Today, more people are having their cats spayed and neutered than ever before. Why? Because people who live with cats are discovering the many benefits of spaying and neutering. This article outlines those benefits and answers commonly asked questions about spaying and neutering. If you have other questions, ask your veterinarian.

I've heard of the Pet Overpopulation Problem. What, exactly, is the problem?

Simply speaking, there are more pets being born than there are homes for them. For this reason, over 10 million dogs and cats in the United States are euthanized each year in animal shelters because no one wants them. Many of these dogs and cats are young, attractive, healthy, friendly and playful. Some appear to be purebred. Because of the pet overpopulation problem, care should be taken to prevent pets from breeding. One solution is to spay or neuter your pet.

What is spaying and neutering?

Female cats are spayed. Male cats are neutered. Spaying and neutering removes an animal's ability to reproduce. Spaying involves surgical removal of the uterus and ovaries. Neutering involves surgical removal of the testicles. Both operations, done under general anesthesia, are safe, routine and relatively painless. Typically, a spayed or neutered cat is up and about within a day of the operation.

What are the benefits of spaying and neutering?

Spayed and neutered pets are less distracted by sexual instincts. They can become more responsive to family members. Spayed and neutered pets are less likely to roam the streets and become lost or injured in search of a mate. (Male cats can smell a female in heat over great distances.)

Isn't spaying and neutering expensive?

Most veterinarians try to keep charges for spaying and neutering affordable, but prices can vary. We suggest you call several veterinarians and spay/neuter clinics to check on costs for your cat. Remember, the one-

time cost of spaying or neutering is minimal compared to the costs of repeated veterinary treatments for pets injured when roaming or fighting. Additionally, paying for a mother cat's proper health care, including possible cesarean delivery, along with feeding, worming and vaccinating litters of kittens can result in excessive veterinary bills.

Spayed and neutered cats are less likely to fight with other cats, thus saving themselves much pain and saving their owners high veterinary bills.

How much time does it take to have a cat spayed/neutered?

Most clinics and veterinary hospitals will accept your cat during morning hours, and the cat is usually available for pickup later that day or the next day.

Will spaying or neutering change my cat's personality?

The majority of cat owners notice no change in their cat's personality. If a change is noticed, it is typically a decrease in their cat's desire to roam, fight with other animals, or exhibit anxious, aggressive behavior. Instead, they become more affectionate.

My cat never leaves my yard. Why should I spay or neuter my cat?

You have already read about the health benefits of spaying and neutering. A female spayed before her first heat is 200 times less likely to develop breast cancer. Also, accidents do happen frequently to backyard cats, as interested suitors usually find a way into the yard. Remember, spayed and neutered cats are calmer, easier to care for, and more attentive to you.

Spaying or neutering a cat, contrary to popular belief, does not make them fat or lazy. Rather, the metabolism of a cat changes after spaying and neutering and the cat requires less food.

Spayed and neutered cats are usually cheaper to license, too!

More Reasons to Spay or Neuter

For Those with Female Cats:

Spayed female cats are less likely to develop cancer or pyometra, a common uterine infection in unaltered females.

Female cats in heat spray and defecate in inappropriate places and stain carpets and furniture. Additionally, they attract noisy, fighting and bothersome males. Spaying eliminates these problems.

Pregnant female cats eat more, both when pregnant and after offspring are born. Health care for pregnant females is expensive.

Raising kittens is expensive, and it is time-consuming to feed, worm, vaccinate, advertise and place them into homes.

For Those with Male Cats:

Neutered male cats are less likely to suffer infections or disorders in the reproductive or prostate glands, or develop lower genito-urinary problems. These conditions can lead to kidney disease, the most common problem in unaltered males over five years old.

Unaltered male cats typically spray urine to mark territory both inside and outside the home. Neutering, at a young age, normally eliminates this problem.

• More Spay & Neuter Myths •

I can find a good home for each kitten in my cat's litter.

Unfortunately, many animals in animal shelters are brought in by owners who were unable to place them in homes.

My children should experience the miracle of birth.

Public television and your library are two highly

informative sources available to teach children about reproduction of animals. For millions of cats, however, the “miracle of birth” is closely matched with the increasing number of cats euthanized due to pet overpopulation.

I can make money by breeding my purebred cat.

Professional breeding of purebred cats is a science involving years of study of desirable breed characteristics. For the novice, little money, if any, can be made when the mother cat is properly cared for and kittens are fed, wormed, vaccinated, and advertised.

My cat is too old to be spayed or neutered.

Cats are safely spayed and neutered every day. Unless your cat has health problems, spaying or neutering is safe and routine. Your veterinarian or low-cost spay/neuter clinic will examine your cat before the operation to determine if any health problems are present.

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