

COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT SPAYING AND NEUTERING

What is spay and neuter?

Spaying or neutering is surgical sterilization. Spaying of females involves the removal of the entire reproductive tract (uterus and ovaries). Neutering of males is done by removing the testicles. Both procedures are performed using strict sterile technique while the pet is under general anesthesia.

Will my dog or cat become fat and lazy after this operation?

Lack of exercise and excessive eating cause weight problems in animals. Some animals may have a slight increase in weight after the operation because they tend to roam less. If your companion puts on a little weight, increase walk or play sessions and reduce daily calories.

Isn't it unnatural to prevent animals from having litters?

We interfered with nature thousands of years ago when we domesticated dogs and cats to make them our companions. Now we have the responsibility to protect them. That means fresh food and water, shelter, love and, yes, spaying and neutering. This crisis is a result of human interference: it is our obligation to fix the problem.

But I have a purebred. Purebreds aren't part of the problem, are they?

One quarter of the dogs handled by animal shelters each year are purebred. People abandon or surrender their purebreds for the very same reasons people leave their mixed breeds: inconvenience, not enough time, too much responsibility. There are just too many dogs and cats-mixed breed and purebred-to justify breeding any of them.

Won't my male animal feel like less of a male?

It may seem silly to say it, but animals are not people. Animals don't have any concept of sexual identity or ego. Neutering a male dog or cat will not change their basic personality. They do not suffer any kind of emotional reaction or identity crisis when neutered. An animal's personality is formed more by genetics and environment than by sex hormones.

Is it best to let my female have one litter first?

Medical studies indicates just the opposite. In fact, the ideal time to spay your female cat or dog is before her first heat. Spaying at a young age prevents uterine infections and reduces the incidence of mammary cancer. A spayed female is a more relaxed companion.

Don't you think it's important for children to witness the miracle of birth?

You probably won't witness the birth: most occur at night, in seclusion. What you will teach your children is that animals can be created and disposed of at our convenience.

I can find homes for all the babies, so that's great, right?

You may find homes for most, or even all, of your animal's litter. This only reduces the number of available homes for other equally worthy homeless animals whose births were not as preventable. Each placement from your new litter is a death sentence for some other deserving animal.

Is the surgery dangerous or painful for the animal?

Spay and neuter surgeries are the most common surgical procedures performed by veterinarians. The procedures are performed under general anesthesia and medications are given to prevent the animal from feeling any pain. Animals are usually fully recovered in just a few days. The minimal risk associated with the surgery is far outweighed by the health benefits to the animal.

BENEFITS OF SPAYING AND NEUTERING

Spaying or Neutering Is Good for Your Pet

- Spaying and neutering helps dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives.
- Spaying and neutering can eliminate or reduce the incidence of a number of health problems that can be very difficult or expensive to treat.
- Spaying eliminates the possibility of uterine or ovarian cancer and greatly reduces the chance of breast cancer, particularly when your pet is spayed before her first heat cycle.
- Spaying virtually eliminates the development of pyometras in dogs and cats. Pyometras are infections of the uterus that can also be expensive, life-threatening medical emergencies.
- Neutering eliminates testicular cancer and decreases the incidence of prostate disease.

Spaying or Neutering Is Good for You

- Spaying and neutering makes pets better, more affectionate companions.
- Animals who have not been sterilized often exhibit more behavior and temperament problems than do those who have been spayed or neutered.
- Unwanted behaviors such as digging, jumping, roaming, spraying and fighting can be virtually eliminated after spay/neuter surgery. Most of these actions are brought on by the drive to find a mate.
- Neutering cats makes them less likely to spray and mark territory.
- Spaying a dog or cat eliminates her heat cycle which lasts an average of six to twelve days, often twice a year, in dogs and an average of six to seven days, three or more times a year, in cats. Spaying also eliminates the bloody discharge of female dogs in heat.
- Cats howl, pace and scratch to get out of the house at all hours of the day and night in order to find a mate. When a female dog or cat goes into heat, male animals from blocks away know it! Every loose male dog in the neighborhood will follow.
- Neutering makes pets less likely to roam the neighborhood, run away, or get into fights without affecting their dog's protective instincts toward their house and family members.
- Spaying and neutering can make pets less likely to bite.

Spaying and Neutering Is Good for the Community

- Communities spend millions of dollars to control unwanted animals.
- Irresponsible breeding and animal abandonment creates stray animals, which are a public health and safety concern.
- Irresponsible breeding contributes to the problem of dog bites and attacks.
- Stray pets and homeless animals get into trash containers, defecate in public areas or on private lawns, and frighten or anger people who have no understanding of their misery or needs.
- Some stray animals also scare away or kill birds and wildlife.
- Preventing the animal suffering and public health concerns of stray and free-roaming animals is the responsibility of every pet owner.

OUR COMMUNITY HAS AN OVERLOAD OF DOGS AND CATS

Our community has an overload of companion animals. Too many dogs and cats aren't wanted anywhere by anybody, so they are treated as disposable items instead of living creatures.

Owners abandon pets they have tired of caring for and dump unwanted litters on doorsteps or along roadsides. Countless companion animals suffer and die on the streets, in alleys, or in the wild. The luckier rejected pets are surrendered to animal shelters. Between four and six million cats and dogs are euthanized each year at shelters in the United States because loving, responsible caregivers cannot be found.

You can help end this tragedy by making sure that your pet does not contribute to the overload. Have your pet spayed or neutered by a veterinarian-this is the first, most important step you can take as a responsible pet owner. (Remember, even if you find a home for your pet's puppies or kittens, you are still taking a home from another animal.)

Spayed and neutered pets make better, healthier companions: they are less likely to bite, to spray or mark territory, or to roam and fight. Spayed female dogs and cats do not suffer from uterine or ovarian cancer and have a much smaller incidence of breast cancer. Neutered male dogs and cats have a lower rate of prostate disease and avoid testicular cancer.

Contrary to popular belief, sterilized pets do not necessarily become fat and lazy. This happens only if pets are given too much to eat and too little exercise.

If you have a friend who wants a puppy or kitten, urge that friend to adopt a homeless animal-there are always a wonderful selection of mixed-breed and purebred pets waiting for good homes. There simply are not enough homes for them all.

Please spay or neuter your pet and urge others to do the same---help reduce the pet population so that all companion animals will get the lifelong care and respect they deserve

The Humane Society of the United States/Humane Society International, 2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, USA