

PROS AND CONS OF SPAYING AND NEUTERING IN CATS

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TO SPAY/NEUTER OR NOT

It's time to start thinking about spaying or neutering your cat. But, you are not quite sure if it is the right thing to do. If you're wondering whether you should just leave your cat as nature intended, consider the positive and negative aspects of spaying and neutering before making your decision.

First, what does neutering mean? Neutering is a procedure used to "de-sex" an animal. This procedure has been used to control animal population growth, reduce unwanted sexual behavior in pets, and decrease or eliminate the possibility of certain disease conditions later in life, such as pyometra or infection in the uterus.

Castration is a term used to describe the removal of the gonads (testicles) in male animals. Spaying is a term used to describe the sterilization procedure of females. The procedure of spaying most often consists of removal of both the ovaries and uterus, which is called an ovariectomy. Both procedures are performed under general anesthesia and both involve a surgical incision.

Neutering is done most commonly at or around six months of age. However, many veterinarians perform this procedure earlier – as early as 8 to 10 weeks in some situations. Early neutering can be done safely and has a number of advantages, especially in cases of pet adoption.

SPAYING – THE POSITIVE SIDE

- Spaying removes the risk of pregnancy.

Pet overpopulation is a serious problem and by allowing your cat to have litters, you are adding to the problem. Finding homes for your new family additions is not as easy as you may think. Even if you choose to keep the kittens, you will have the additional cost of vaccines, parasite control, toys and food for several pets. In addition to costs, the health of the mother can be in jeopardy during delivery. Some new mothers can have serious complications delivering kittens and can even develop health problems during nursing. All these potential problems can be avoided by spaying your cat.

- Spaying makes for a calmer cat.

Without the drive to mate, your cat may be quieter and won't be prone to cat calls and the incessant need to seek out a mate. The spayed pet no longer attracts males and their annoying advances and serenades. Spayed cats are also easier to get along with. They tend to be more gentle and affectionate.

- Spaying keeps your cat healthier.

A final positive aspect of spaying your cat is that spayed cats tend to have fewer health problems. Spaying is the removal of the ovaries and uterus. Without these organs, ovarian cysts, uterine infections and cancer of the reproductive tract are no longer a concern.

SPAYING – THE NEGATIVE SIDE

- Spaying means sterilization.

Spaying will result in the sterilization of your cat, and she will no longer have the ability to become pregnant. In the era of pet overpopulation and the fact that thousands of unwanted pets are euthanized each year, this is really not so bad.

- Spaying may cause weight gain.

Some cats may gain weight after spaying and as they get older. Unspayed animals typically have a strong mating desire and can expend a lot of energy seeking a mate and reproducing. Without this energy burden, your cat may eat the same amount but not burn off as many calories. Cutting back on food intake or increasing your pet's activity will help reduce weight gain.

NEUTERING – THE POSITIVE SIDE

- Neutering removes the risk of pregnancy.

Pet overpopulation is a serious issue and by allowing your cat to breed, you are adding to the problem. Although you may not own the female cat, and you are not burdened with finding homes for those new kittens, someone else is. Even if you accept your responsibility and choose to keep the kittens, you will have the additional cost of vaccines, parasite control, toys and food for several pets.

- Neutering makes for a cleaner, calmer pet.

Another positive aspect of neutering your cat is that neutering can result in a calmer, and sometimes cleaner, home. Without the drive to mate, your cat may be quieter and not prone to cat calls and an incessant need to seek out a mate. The neutered cat no longer feels the need to seek out and serenade females. He no longer has the stress of needing to mark his territory and urinate throughout the house and yard. Neutered cats are also easier to get along with. They tend to be more gentle and affectionate. Neutered males tend to roam less and typically are not involved in as many fights with other animals.

- Neutering keeps your pet healthier.

A final positive aspect of neutering your cat is that neutered cats tend to have fewer health problems. Neutering is the removal of the testicles. Without these organs, testicular cancer is no longer a concern and the risk of prostate problems is reduced. For those people who would like to sterilize their cat but do not wish to alter his appearance, testicular implants are available.

NEUTERING – THE NEGATIVE SIDE

- Neutering is sterilization.

Neutering will result in the sterilization of your cat.

- Neutering may cause weight gain.

Some cats gain weight after neutering. Intact animals typically have a strong mating desire and can expend a lot of energy seeking a mate and reproducing. Without this energy burden, your cat may eat the same amount but not burn off as many calories. Cutting back on his food or increasing his activity can help reduce the weight gain.

Last year about 17 million dogs and cats were turned over to animal shelters. Only one out of every 10 taken in to the shelters found a home. This means that over 13.5 million had to be destroyed. The tragedy is that this is unnecessary. Much of the problem could be eliminated by simple surgery: Spaying and neutering operations are performed under general anesthesia and are quite painless. By neutering pets, owners can help lower the numbers of unwanted and homeless creatures.