

## **Ovariohysterectomy (Spay)**

Peter S. Sakas DVM, MS

Niles Animal Hospital and Bird Medical Center

7278 N. Milwaukee Ave. Niles, IL 60714

Ph 847-647-9325 Fax 847-647-8498

[www.nilesanimalhospital.com](http://www.nilesanimalhospital.com)

The operation to neuter a female pet is called spaying or the more descriptive term ovariohysterectomy. When a pet is spayed both ovaries as well as the uterus are removed. The reason the ovaries are also removed in pets is because they produce hormones that can lead to complications later in life. It is essential to spay your female pets because of these potential complications.

There is a great deal of misinformation pertaining to spaying. Some people say that a female should go through a heat cycle or even have a litter before they get spayed. This is absolutely false. The female should be spayed BEFORE her first heat or no later than before her second heat cycle because by doing so it will virtually eliminate the risk of breast cancer. Veterinary research showed that cats spayed before 6 months of age had a 91% reduction in their risk of breast cancer compared to intact cats, and cats spayed before one year had an 86% reduction. Dogs spayed before their first heat cycle have a 0.5% risk of developing breast cancer, if spayed between their first and second heat the risk is 8%. After the second heat cycle the risk of breast cancer development is 26%. Dogs spayed after two years of age have seven times the risk of developing breast cancer compared to dogs spayed before six months.

In addition, spaying eliminates the risk of ovarian and uterine cancer, heat cycles, as well as unwanted pregnancies. Unspayed females run the risk of developing uterine infections when they are in heat. This can be manifested by a severe and life-threatening condition called pyometra (the uterus fills with pus). Surgical intervention is required to save the pet's life but it is very risky due to the severity of the condition.

It is best to spay your female pet early in life; the risks of surgery are less when young and the development of complications from female hormone are reduced. Do not face the heartbreak of having a pet suffer from a condition that could have been avoided by having a simple procedure done safely early in life.