

Spaying & Neutering Means Healthier, Happier Pets

What are the benefits of spaying and neutering cats and dogs? Here are a few facts to consider:

A neutered tomcat is less likely to roam, less likely to fight (and less likely to cost you money to patch him up), and less likely to spray urine to mark his territory. He's more likely to live longer, because the cat that's looking for a mate is really looking for trouble. If a car doesn't get him, infectious disease (spread by fighting or mating) or cancer may.

A spayed female cat is a more attentive and loving pet, because her energy isn't constantly directed toward finding a mate. (Cats are in heat nearly all the time until they become pregnant.) If you spay your cat, you protect her from some cancers and infections and from sexually transmitted infectious diseases.

A neutered male dog retains his playfulness and friendliness. The behaviors that change are far less desirable. The interest in roaming is eliminated in 90% of neutered dogs. Aggressive behavior against other male dogs is eliminated in 60% of neutered dogs. Urine marking is eliminated in 50% of neutered male dogs. Inappropriate mounting is eliminated in 70% of neutered dogs. Activity level and appetite do not change with neutering. A male dog should not gain weight or become less interested in activity post neuter.

A spayed female dog no longer goes into heat every 8 months or so. There is no more bloody discharge or offensive odors to attract male dogs. A female dog spayed before her first heat will have a near zero chance of developing mammary cancer.

"Spaying" and "neutering" are the everyday terms for the surgical sterilization of a pet. Neutering -- or altering -- is also used to describe both procedures. The technical terms for the

two operations are "ovariohysterectomy," for the female, and "castration," for the male - which pretty much explains why "spaying" and "neutering" are the preferred terms.

Spaying is the removal of the female's entire reproductive system: The uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries are taken out through an incision in the abdomen. Absorbable sutures do not need to be removed. Recovery is fast, taking just a few days (usually 7-10), during which you should limit your cat or dog's activities -- no jumping or boisterous play.

In neutering, the male testicles are removed through incisions in the scrotum, the pouch holding the testicles. The skin incision may or may not have stitches. Post-operative care normally involves keeping the incisions clean and dry. Cats are recommended to stay inside (if he is not already an indoor pet) and using crystal litter in place of regular litter until the incisions close, which usually happens within three to five days. Keep neutered males separated from in heat females for at least one to two weeks after surgery as sperm in the neutered male's ductal system could still impregnate females.

Puppies and kittens can be spayed by 6-months of age, after completing their vaccinations. It is best to spay and neuter pets before they go into the first heat (usually occurs between 5-7 months). Male neuter surgery is less complicated than a female spay surgery. Males can be safely neutered after 5-months of age.

Spaying and neutering helps reduce pet over-population and the number of unwanted pets. Most importantly, it helps pets live longer and healthier lives!

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