

# Why Spay or Neuter Your Cat?

*Basic Feline Health*



## CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Altering your cat removes its ability to reproduce and helps a longer, healthier life.

### **Spaying or Neutering**

Males are neutered, meaning the testicles are removed. This is a fairly easy procedure. He usually goes home the same day, and returns to regular activities the following day.

Females are spayed, which removes their ovaries. Surgery is a little more involved for females, since an incision is made in their abdomens. But females also usually come home the same day, and have somewhat limited activity for two or three days until the stitches start to heal. Females should definitely be spayed before their first heat, which can occur as young as four months old.

### **Why Spay or Neuter**

Relieve your cat from the sexual frustration associated with the desire to breed. They have no emotional need to breed. You may resist the idea of altering your cat, but there are many benefits:

#### **Prevent pet overpopulation:**

The PETCO Foundation reports that only 1 out of 12 cats born ever find a permanent home. Over 7 million healthy pets are euthanized every year in the U.S. because there aren't enough homes for them. For every kitten your pet produces, that's a cat or kitten somewhere else that will die in a shelter. Cats breed more often than dogs, producing up to 4 litters a year. Just one litter of 6 can multiply in 6 years to over 420,000 cats!! During kitten season (spring and summer) the animal shelters take in over 400 unwanted kittens a month, often with their mothers.

Unwanted cats cannot just be set free to fend for themselves. The feral cats you see down at the beach or around warehouses have to be cared for by someone to survive. If you think you just want an outdoor cat, he won't be around long if he's not altered. They will roam for miles looking for females. An outdoor cat's lifespan is only about three years.

#### **Less behavior problems:**

Neutered males are less likely to mark their territory. Spraying is smelly, messy, and offensive to everyone except the cat. It is easier to prevent spraying by early neutering than to cure your cat of this behavior when he is older and the habit is formed. Females in heat are equally offensive. They will try to scratch through window screens and howl endlessly.

#### **Altered cats are less aggressive:**

Catfights are a noisy nighttime activity that can be prevented by altering. Females will fight too. Cats come home injured and foul smelling, their coat gets scruffy, and their injuries can become infected. They are also harder to handle and less friendly when left intact.

#### **Better health:**

Females are at risk for mammary or uterine cancer. A nursing mother can get mastitis. Males can get testicular or prostate cancer. And the above-mentioned fights can cost hundreds of dollars in vet bills.

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### **Common Objections** "Altering makes them fat and lazy."

Eating too much makes them fat and lazy, not spaying or neutering. Your cat will be healthy and live longer when altered.

### **"I want my kids to experience the miracle of birth."**

Because of the problem with pet overpopulation and the amount of pets in shelters, this isn't a very good reason to let your cat procreate. Many births occur at night and in seclusion, so witnessing the event may not happen. It is probably more important to teach children about pet responsibility.

Afterwards you are responsible for finding homes for them all, not just one you may decide to keep. Because cats can breed so often, you will run out of people to give them to after the first few litters. Giving them away at the grocery does not ensure them a good home. Also, each home you find means one less home for the cats in shelters that need good homes.

### **"My cat's too old."**

They are almost never too old for spay/neuter surgery. Unless your vet finds a health reason, go ahead and have it done. You could combine it with another procedure like teeth cleaning. Their health and behavior will improve immediately.

### **Where to get your pet spayed or neutered**

#### **Contact your local PETCO**

Your local PETCO will be able to provide you with names of clinics near you.

#### **Contact your veterinarian**

Your veterinarian may be able to work out financing options for you. Remember, spaying or neutering is a one-time cost with a lifetime of benefits.

#### **Contact your local animal shelter**

They may operate a clinic or be able to provide you recommendations for low cost spay/neuter clinics that are available in your community.

### **Suggested Reading**

Cats for Dummies by Gina Spadafori and Paul P. Dion, DVM, DACVM

ASPCA Complete Cat Care

The Complete Idiot's Guide to a Healthy Cat by Elaine Wexler-Mitchell, DVM

Owner's Guide to a Happy Healthy Kitten: Care and Training, by Amy Shojai

Cat Owner's Veterinary Handbook, by Carlson and Giffin

You and Your Cat by David Taylor