



Spay or Neuter – Why?

The answer is clear:

- Altering pets helps prevent the unwanted birth of animals that would be difficult to place into good homes. Sadly each year more than 15 million dogs and cats are killed because of overpopulation.
- The spaying and neutering of pets can also their incidence of sex-hormone related disease.



Will my dog or cat be a better pet after altering?

- Yes. In addition to the benefits of not having heat periods and unwanted offspring, the animal's tendency to roam is decreased. Most pets become less aggressive toward people and other animals.

What are some of the other advantages of altering my pets?

- The neutered male cat has a decreased urine odor, less of a tendency to fight and roam, and is far less inclined to spray urine to mark its territory.
- The neutered male dog is also less likely to roam, mark territory, and display aggression towards other dogs.
- Neutered dogs have fewer prostate problems, tumors around the anus, and decreased urine odor.
- The spayed female cat and dog do not have reproductive tract disease problems and both are troubled with significantly fewer cases of mammary cancer.

What is actually done in a spay or neuter procedure?

- In both cases the animal is put under general anesthesia so they cannot feel anything.
- A spay surgery (also called an ovariectomy) is performed on females. While performed routinely, ovariectomy is considered major surgery in which the reproductive tract -- including the ovaries, fallopian tubes, and uterus -- is removed.
- Neutering refers to castration of a male animal, a surgical procedure in which both testicles are removed. Neutering requires considerably less time and equipment than a spay surgery.

How old should my pet be before surgery?

- The best way to decide on a timetable for your particular pet is to consult with your veterinarian. Current research indicates that in general it is safe to alter dogs and cats as early as 8 weeks of age.
- At Myrtle Veterinary Hospital we generally recommend 5 months of age for dogs and 3 months (at least 2 pounds) for cats.

Should the female have a heat period or a litter before being spayed?

- If your pet is going to be a companion animal rather than a breeding animal, then there are not benefits for allowing her to have a litter or to go through a heat period.
- It is actually healthier for your dog or cat never to experience a heat as it lessens the animal's chance of getting mammary cancer and decreases the animal's stress and risks due to pregnancy and delivery.
- Research indicates that dogs spayed prior to their first heat have less than 0.5% chance of experiencing mammary cancer as compared to an 8% chance after the second heat.



Is it safe for a dog and cat to be spayed when she is in heat or pregnant?

- Females in good health can have the surgery done when they are in heat or pregnant. It does require more surgery and anesthesia time and is often more expensive of a procedure in comparison. Consult with your veterinarian for recommendations for your particular pet.

Isn't it unnatural to deprive my pet of a sex life?

- No. Dogs and cats have sex strictly to satisfy hormone-induced instincts, not for pleasure.

Why shouldn't I just keep my female dog or cat confined while she is in heat?

- You can do this, of course. But remember, your unspayed dog will come into heat twice a year for its entire life. Also, so not forget all the health benefits available to your pet by having them spayed.

Will spaying and neutering my pet cause it to become fat and lazy?

- No. Weight gain is due to being fed more calories than the animal uses. Watch the quantity of food given to your pet. Remember, older pets need fewer calories than younger ones because they tend to be less active and are no longer growing. Regular play and exercise are the keys to keeping your pet in shape.

What about the statement, "Only sissies have neutered animals"?

- Neither the pet nor the owner is a sissy. Having your pet neutered or spayed is a sign of a smart, compassionate, responsible, and secure person.

Why should you alter your pet? Let's review.

Not only does spaying and neutering help solve the pet overpopulation problem, it also provides many health and behavior benefits.

- The altered pet is less likely to roam.
- The altered pet is less aggressive.
- The altered pet is less prone to getting certain cancers.
- The altered male has less urine odor, especially true of cats.
- The altered male cat is less likely to spray urine to mark territory.

Information for this flyer courtesy of The Oregon Veterinary Medical Association. The Oregon Veterinary Medical Association is a nonprofit organization of more than 700 veterinarians, dedicated to helping people give their animals a high quality of life.