

## Spaying/Neutering

One of the most important decisions you can make for your new pet is to have him or her neutered. In females, surgical sterilization is called spaying. In males, the removal of testicles is called castration.

These procedures are best performed at five to six months of age. These two surgical procedures not only enhance your pet's life medically, but also from behavior and social aspects as well.

Female pets that get spayed are less likely to develop breast cancer, ovarian cancer, or uterine infections. In addition, they cannot become pregnant. Surprise pregnancies can result in unwanted puppies and kittens or oversized fetuses. Offspring that are too large for the mother are not only at risk themselves, but also jeopardize the well-being of their mother. Lastly, females that are not spayed are extremely messy and a challenge to manage during their "heat" cycle. Your nice furniture and carpet are at risk of being ruined during your female pet's period.

Male pets that get castrated are less likely to develop testicular cancer or prostate diseases (including prostate cancer). As a bonus, castrated male pets are less likely to exhibit male behaviors such as aggressiveness or "roaming". If castrated early enough, male pets will be less inclined to display marking behaviors.

Pets that are spayed or neutered are more likely to gain excess weight. But **only** if they are fed in a similar manner to the way they were fed before being "fixed". Because estrogens and androgens are steroid hormones, they increase the metabolism of our pets' bodies. When the sources of these hormones are removed (ie. the ovaries in spayed females and the testicles in castrated males), the metabolism decreases, and weight is gained more easily when pets are overfed.

The simple solution is that none of our pets feed themselves; **we** have to dish their food out of the bag. By simply measuring the amount we offer them, we control the number of calories they ingest. Combine measured feeding with the benefits of spaying or neutering, and you have a recipe for adding years to your pet's life!