

Frequently Asked Questions Spay and Neuter

Why should I spay/neuter my pet?

Top 10 Reasons to Spay or Neuter Your Pet (Source: ASPCA)

1. *Your female dog or cat will live a longer, healthier life.*

Spaying—the removal of the ovaries and uterus—is a veterinary procedure performed under general anesthesia that usually requires minimal hospitalization. Spaying a female cat or dog helps prevent pyometra (pus-filled uterus) and breast cancer. Treatment of pyometra requires hospitalization, intravenous fluids and antibiotics. Breast cancer can be fatal in about 50 percent of female dogs and in 90 percent of female cats. Spaying your pet before her first heat offers the best protection from these diseases.

2. *There are major health benefits for your male animal companion, too.*

Besides preventing unwanted litters, neutering your male dog or cat—the surgical removal of the testicles—prevents testicular cancer, if done before six months of age.

3. *Your spayed female won't go into heat.*

While cycles can vary greatly, female felines usually go into heat four to five days every three weeks during breeding season. In an effort to advertise for mates, they'll yowl and urinate more frequently—sometimes all over the house. Unspayed female dogs generally have a bloody discharge for about a week, and can conceive for another week or so.

4. *Your male dog won't need to roam away from home...*

An intact male in search of a mate will do just about anything to get one! That includes digging his way under the fence and making like Houdini to escape from the house. And once he's free to roam, he risks injury in traffic and fights with other males.

5. *...and he will be much better behaved to boot!*

Neutered cats and dogs focus their attention on their human families. On the other hand, unneutered dogs and cats may mark their territory by spraying strong-smelling urine all over the house. Indoors, male dogs may embarrass you by mounting on furniture and human legs when stimulated. And FYI, a neutered dog protects his home and family just as well as unneutered dog--and many aggression problems can be avoided by early neutering.

6. *Spaying or neutering will NOT make your pet fat.*

It's no use to use that old excuse! Lack of exercise and overfeeding will cause your pet to pack on the extra pounds—not neutering. Your pet will remain fit and trim as long as you continue to provide exercise and monitor food intake.

7. *Spaying or neutering is highly cost-effective.*

The cost of your pet's spay or neuter surgery is a lot less than the cost of having and caring for a litter. It also beats the cost of treatment when your unneutered tom escapes and gets into fights with neighborhood strays...or the cost of cleaning the carpet that your unspayed female keeps mistaking for her litter box, or the cost of...well, you get the idea!

8. *It's good for the community.*

Stray animals pose real problems in many parts of the country. They can prey on wildlife, cause vehicular accidents, damage the local fauna and scare children.

9. *Your pet doesn't need to have a litter for your children to witness the miracle of birth.*

We've heard this one a lot. We believe that letting your pet produce offspring you have no intention of keeping teaches your children irresponsibility. Anyone who has seen an animal euthanized in a shelter

for lack of a home knows the truth behind this myth. There are countless books and videos available to teach your children about birth in a responsible manner. Also, many 4H Clubs teach animal husbandry, and can offer an educational opportunity to witness the live birth of an animal.

10. It packs a powerful punch in the fight against pet overpopulation.

Millions of cats and dogs of all ages and breeds are euthanized annually or suffer as strays. These high numbers are the result of unwanted, unplanned litters that could have been prevented by spaying or neutering.

Isn't it true that you only need to "fix" female dogs or cats?

Absolutely not! A male animal can father thousands of offspring in his lifetime. Roaming tomcats fighting other cats are a neighborhood nuisance and are prone to develop infections and abscesses from their fighting. An intact male may also develop the bad habit of marking its territory by urine marking.

Neutering just costs too much!

The cost of caring for a pet, including providing veterinary care, should be considered before acquiring an animal. Animal Samaritans provides low cost spay and neuter services to the Coachella Valley. In special circumstances, Animal Samaritans can provide even no cost spaying and neutering provided that the owner of the animal can provide proof of income. The costs of having a litter are often more than the cost of neutering. There could be complications requiring hospitalization or surgery. You will be faced with finding homes or keeping the offspring yourself or placing more animals into your local shelter. The cost of the well-being of not just your pet but of future generations should be considered.

Can't I allow my purebred dog to have just one litter?

Mixed breed or purebred -- there just aren't enough homes. Animal shelters receive purebred animals everyday. Responsible purebred breeders have homes for their dogs before they are born.

I don't even own a pet! Why is this my problem?

All of us are affected by animal overpopulation. Millions of tax dollars are spent annually to round up lost, abandoned, and unwanted pets. Much of that money is spent to destroy these animals when homes cannot be found. Health is threatened by the danger of transmittable diseases, including rabies, animal bites, and attacks. Property may be damaged and livestock killed when pets roam in search of food. Animal waste, proving a serious environment hazard, foul yards and parks. It is only when all of us assume the responsibility for pet overpopulation that we will see any decrease in the problem.

If I find homes for my pets' litters then I won't contribute to the problem, right?

Wrong. Only a certain number of people want pets. So every home you find for your pet's offspring takes away a home from a loving animal already at a shelter.

Shouldn't every female pet have at least one litter before being spayed?

No. In fact, your pet will be healthier if she never sexually matures. Her personality will not improve either. She is just as likely to become less social and more aggressive after having a litter, as she is to become calmer and gentler

Procedure

At what age can my pet have this procedure done?

Both spaying and neutering can be performed as early as six weeks of age. "Early" neutering since this guarantees that the animals will not be able to breed and populate within a community.

When can my pet have the procedure?

All surgeries MUST be scheduled in advance. Our scheduler can be reached at 760.343.3477 ext 106. Our clinic received over 110 calls a day inquiring into the various procedures that we offer. Every call is important to us but sometimes we can not return your scheduling related call for 48 hours. Please be patient. We want to help as many animals as possible. In addition to phone call scheduling, we are starting to accept inquiries about scheduling by email. This procedure is on a trial basis. Please feel free to email klerma@animalsamaritans.org.

Does my animal need to do anything special to prepare for the surgery?

The night prior to surgery, starting at 8:00 PM, animals can take no food or water by mouth.

We recommend that all pets be vaccinated for at least two weeks prior to your appointment so they have immunity to common diseases. Animal Samaritans vaccinates pets with no appointments necessary Mon-Friday 9:30 AM to Noon & 1:30 to 3:30 PM or on the Saturdays when the clinic is open. [\[HYPerlink to vaccinations\]](#)

If you are scheduling your pet for a spay or neuter procedure, we also encourage you to inquire about how we can help in your pet's dental needs at the same time. [\[Hyperlink to Dental\]](#)

The day of surgery what happens?

1. Check-in time is 8:00 AM for dogs and 8:30 AM for cats.
2. All dogs must be on a leash and all cats must be in an individual cat carrier.
3. You must complete the necessary admission forms when you arrive.
4. We accept cash or payment by VISA, MasterCard, or Discover credit card. No checks are accepted.
5. No animals are held overnight and we do not board pets. Pick-ups occur between 3:30 PM and 4:30 PM. The facility is closed at 5:00PM.

What does the surgery do?

Your pet has had major surgery which was done under anesthetic. In female dogs and cats, the uterus and ovaries are removed through a small incision in the abdominal wall. In both male dogs and cats, the testicles are removed. Females are unable to get pregnant. Males are no longer able to father offspring. Female dogs and cats have a mid-line incision in their abdomen. Male dogs have an incision just above the scrotum and male cats have two incisions, one in each side of the scrotum.

What should I expect when I get my pet back?

Check the incision site. What you see today is what we consider normal. There should be no drainage. Redness and swelling should be minimal. Male cats may appear as if they still have testicles. This is normal, the swelling should subside gradually through the recovery period. **DO NOT ALLOW YOUR PET TO LICK OR CHEW AT THE INCISION.**

What do the sutures look like?

Unless you are told otherwise, your pet does not have external sutures, but ones inside that dissolve. The very outer layer of skin is held together with surgical glue. Do not clean or apply topical ointment to the incision

site. If you are told that your pet has skin sutures or skin staples, they will need to return in 7-10 days to have those removed. Male cats do not have any sutures.

Can I let my dog/cat play?

Some animals are active after surgery, while others are quiet. It is very important that you limit your pet's activity for the next 7-10 days. Pets should be kept indoors where they can stay clean, dry, and warm. Do not bathe your pet during the recovery period. Dogs must be walked on a leash and cats must be kept inside. Keep your pet quiet. Dogs and female cats have internal and external sutures that provide strength to the tissue as they heal. Any strenuous activity could disrupt this healing process. The healing process takes at least 7 days.

Will my dog/cat eat normally?

Your pet's appetite should return gradually within 24 hours of surgery. Lethargy lasting for more than 24 hours after surgery, diarrhea, or vomiting are not normal and you should contact us immediately. Do not change your pet's diet at this time and do not give junk food, table scraps, milk or any other people food for a period of one week. This could mask post-surgical complications.

What are the potential complications?

Spaying and neutering are very safe surgeries; however, although rare, complications can occur. Minimal redness and swelling should resolve within several days. If it persists longer, please contact us. Please contact us immediately if you notice any of the following:

- vomiting
- diarrhea
- discharge or bleeding from the incision
- difficulty urinating
- labored breathing

If you have any questions or concerns directly related to the surgery during the recovery period, please call this office at (760) 343-3477 Ext. XXX during office hours. If there is an emergency please consult your vet of the local emergency clinic.

Animal Samaritans will treat at our clinic, at minimal cost, any post-op complications resulting directly from the surgery, if the above post-operative instructions are followed in full. Your regular veterinarian must address illnesses or injuries that are not a direct result of surgery. We cannot be held responsible for complications resulting from failure to follow post-op instructions, or for contagious disease for which the animal was not previously properly vaccinated.