



## The Importance of Spaying and Neutering Your Pet

Spaying is the term used to describe a surgical procedure in which a female's ovaries and uterus are removed to prevent future heat cycles and pregnancies. Neutering is the term used to describe a surgical procedure in which a male's testicles are removed, rendering him unable to reproduce. Both spaying and neutering are sometimes referred to as a gonadectomy or desexing, sterilizing, or "fixing" your pet. Most individuals understand the benefits of spaying and neutering their pets, but some important points are not as well known. This handout is intended to explain some of those benefits in case you are undecided about getting your pet spayed or neutered.

### The Importance of Sterilizing Your Pet:

- Spaying Benefits:
  - Eliminates heat (estrus) cycles
  - Prevents unplanned pregnancies and helps to decrease pet over-population
  - Eliminates the risk of ovarian and uterine cancers
  - Decreases the chance of developing mammary (breast) cancer. But, the more heat cycles that pass before your pet is spayed will increase the risk of developing mammary cancer.
  - Decreases the risk of pyometras (uterine infections)
  - A longer lifespan on average compared to intact females
- Neutering Benefits:
  - Can decrease roaming, spraying, and marking behaviors.
  - Decreases the risk of developing benign prostatic hyperplasia (enlarged prostate gland) and testicular cancer.
  - A longer lifespan on average compared to intact males

As with any surgical procedure, there are potential risks involved, but the benefits of the procedure generally outweigh the risks. Additionally, these risks are rare and can be lessened with various practices.

### Potential Risks Post Spay or Neuter Surgery:

- Surgical complications such as reactions to the anesthetics or suture materials used, internal bleeding, or post-operative infections.
- Disadvantages associated with the lack of reproductive hormones such as potential urinary incontinence, weight gain, and orthopedic issues



- Possible increased risk of osteosarcoma in large breed dogs neutered at an early age. There have been reports of rare cancers possibly linked to the neutering of certain breeds.

### Tips for Decreasing the Risks Associated with Spaying and Neutering

- Picking the appropriate time to spay or neuter your pet can be a complicated subject since many factors are involved, and veterinarians have different opinions concerning this question. Below you will find our recommendations at Ely Veterinary Care (EVC). If you have specific questions concerning why we recommend these ages, please give us a call!
  - Spaying:
    - Cats can be safely spayed around 5 - 6 months of age.
    - Small to medium breed dogs can be spayed at 6 months of age.
    - Large to giant breed dogs can be spayed at 6 months to 18 months of age.
  - Neutering:
    - Cats can be safely neutered around 5 – 6 months of age.
    - Small to medium breed dogs can be neutered at 6 months of age.
    - Large to giant breed dogs can be neutered at 12 – 18 months of age.
- Not spaying your pet while she is in heat.
  - Pets in their estrus cycle tend to bleed more during surgery.
  - Sometimes this cannot be avoided in cats due to their every 2-3 week heat cycles. Attempting to spay your cat around 5-6 months of age helps with this issue since they often do not start cycling until they reach this age.
- Not spaying your pet while she is pregnant.
  - The blood vessels on the uterus are larger during pregnancy, increasing the risk of bleeding.
- Making sure your pet wears an e-collar for at least two weeks after surgery helps to decrease post-operative infections secondary to your pet licking at their incision site.
- Decreasing your pet's normal food intake by 1/3 post-operatively is recommended since it is known that their metabolism decreases by 25% - 33% after a spay or neuter procedure.

Please contact us if you have any questions regarding the decision to spay or neuter your pet!

\*For more information on the benefits of spaying and neutering your pet, please see this AVMA link: <https://www.avma.org/resources/pet-owners/petcare/spaying-and-neutering>