

## Spay and Neuter Information Sheet

Did you know that a female dog can become pregnant as early as 6 months of age and a female cat as early as 4 months? If not, you're not alone. Each year unwanted litters of puppies and kittens create thousands of homeless pets and most unplanned litters happen because many owners are unaware of this fact. The most important tool in managing the pet overpopulation crisis is spaying or neutering your pet, also known as getting them "fixed" or "sterilized". The Toronto Humane Society has prepared some



information to help you get informed on these procedures. We hope that you will join us on our mission to improve the lives of animals and do your part by spaying or neutering your pet.

### What's a spay?

A "spay" is the common term used to describe the surgical procedure which renders a female dog or cat unable to reproduce. The procedure itself is known as an ovariectomy, which means that the ovaries and uterus are removed through an incision made just below the belly button. This is done under a general anesthetic, so that the pet is asleep and does not feel pain during the procedure.

### What's a neuter?

A "neuter" is the common term for rendering a male dog unable to reproduce. This procedure is also known as an orchiectomy, meaning that both testicles are removed through a small incision made in front of or on the scrotum. This procedure is performed while the pet is under a general anesthetic, so that they do not feel pain during the procedure.

### What are the benefits of spaying and neutering my pet?

- Spays and neuters are the most effective way to prevent pregnancy and help reduce pet overpopulation.
- Spaying your female pet greatly reduces the risk of mammary cancer. It is important to note that with every additional heat cycle, there is an increased the risk of mammary cancer, so spaying your pet before their first heat allows you to maximize the benefit of this procedure.
- In female animals, spaying eliminates the risk of ovarian and uterine cancers.
- A spay is also the best way to prevent uterine infections, also known as a pyometra. This is a life threatening condition, requiring emergency surgery which can be very costly. If left intact, 25% of female dogs will develop a pyometra before 10 years of age.
- Spaying your female pet also prevents heat cycles, which eliminates associated yowling and crying, in cats, as well as bloody vaginal discharge and behaviour changes in dogs.
- Left intact, cats will continuously come into heat through the breeding season (February to October), which can be a very stressful time for all involved.
- Neutering your male pet eliminates the risk of testicular cancers and lowers the risk of prostate disease.
- Neutering your male pet can reduce undesirable behaviours such as roaming, humping, aggression towards other male dogs, as well as spraying around the house and inter-cat aggression in cats.



## **What are the risks of spaying and neutering my pet?**

With any surgical procedure or general anesthetic, there are always risks associated. It is important to know that bleeding, infection, swelling, breakdown of the surgical site are possible complications after a spay or neuter. For this reason, it is critical to closely follow the detailed instructions that will be given to you for caring for your pet post-operatively. Anesthesia can also come with complications, such as allergic reaction, fluctuations in heart rate or blood pressure and, although very rare, can even result in death. Your veterinary team will do everything in their power to keep your pet safe as safe as possible and notify you of any concerns.

Many owners also worry that their pet will gain weight after being spayed or neutered. This is a myth! A dog or cat's metabolism does slow down when they are no longer able to reproduce, but this does not mean that they have to gain weight. Adjusting your pet's caloric intake is the best way to prevent obesity and your veterinary team will be happy to guide you with how much to feed your pet.

In a detailed analysis of the veterinarian literature the benefits of spay/neuter for small breed dogs and for large breed female dogs all weigh in favor of spay/neuter prior to five months of age. The timing of neutering can be a little bit more confusing for large breed male dogs. Considerations may vary depending upon personal circumstances and your veterinarian will be happy to discuss the timing of this procedure with you further.

Although there are risks associated with spaying or neutering your pet, they are far outweighed by the benefits of these procedures. Your veterinary team will be happy to help you further with answering any questions regarding spaying or neutering your pet.

