

Spay and Neuter

Patient Eligibility

Toronto Humane Society's Public Veterinary Services operates a high-quality high-volume spay and neuter clinic. This clinic model provides safe spay and neuter surgeries to large numbers of patients through standardized protocols and efficient techniques. This type of clinic is best suited for healthy cats and dogs undergoing routine surgeries and is not designed to serve the needs of high-risk patients.

If you have questions about whether your pet is eligible for surgery at our clinic, please contact csa@torontohumanesociety.com.

What is the MINIMUM AGE for spay and neuter?

- **Cats** should be at least **8 weeks (2 months)** old for spay or neuter surgery.
- **Dogs** should be at least **8 weeks (2 months)** old for spay or neuter surgery.

Please note that until 5 months of age, cats and dogs are not fully protected against infectious disease by their vaccinations.

What is the MAXIMUM AGE for spay and neuter?

- There is **no maximum age** for spay and neuter surgery. However, senior pets are more likely to have other health issues that can increase the risks associated with anesthesia and surgery. Depending on the situation, elective surgery may not always be what is best for the health of a senior or geriatric pet.
- **Cats and dogs 8 years of age and older are asked to book a presurgical consult** for a physical examination and a discussion with a veterinarian about the pet's health and whether a spay or neuter surgery is recommended. Bloodwork is recommended prior to surgery for senior pets and will be offered at the time of the presurgical consult. Whether the bloodwork is recommended or required will be at the discretion of the veterinarian based on the consult and exam findings.

What is the MINIMUM WEIGHT for spay and neuter?

- Cats and dogs should weigh at least **900 grams (2 pounds)** and meet the minimum age requirements before a spay or neuter surgery.

What is the MAXIMUM WEIGHT for spay and neuter?

- There is **no maximum weight for spays or neuters for cats**. However, cats who are overweight or obese are an increased surgical and anesthetic risk. If your pet is considered overweight or obese, the veterinarian will advise you of the increased risk the morning of surgery. You may be asked to sign a supplemental consent form.
- There is **no maximum weight for male dogs**.
- **Female dogs over 40 kg (~90 lbs) are asked to book presurgical consults** to discuss the procedure and allow us to book the surgery for a day where we have the time and staff to safely accommodate a patient of this size. You may be asked to sign a supplemental consent form the day of surgery.

What if my pet is or might be PREGNANT?

- **If your pet is pregnant, a spay surgery can still be safely performed.** The uterus and the ovaries will be removed, and the pregnancy will be ended. A C-section (removal of the fetuses



from the uterus) will NOT be performed. When the female animal is placed under anesthesia, the fetuses will undergo anesthesia as well. A pregnant spay is considered a humane procedure that does not cause any pain or suffering.

- Performing a spay in early pregnancy is very similar to a typical spay. It is possible the pregnancy will not be detected until the surgery is in progress, in which case the spay will be completed.
- Late pregnancy may be detectable on the physical exam prior to surgery. In this situation, you would be given the option of whether to proceed with surgery. There is a slightly increased surgical and anesthetic risk for patients in advanced pregnancy, however this procedure is frequently performed by our clinic and is generally very safe. You may be asked to sign a supplemental consent form the day of surgery.

What if my pet is LACTATING (nursing a litter)?

- It is recommended to wait **8 weeks after birth** until the puppies or kittens are fully weaned before proceeding with a spay surgery. This is to allow the uterus and the teats to reduce in size.

***Surgery may be performed on cats and dogs less than 8 weeks post-partum on a case-by-case basis. Please contact us to discuss if you are seeking surgery for pet who recently had a litter.*

What if my pet is IN HEAT?

- Cats who are in heat are eligible for spay and can be scheduled as normal.
- Dogs who are in heat are asked to wait until at least 4 weeks after the heat cycle.

Are vaccines required?

- **We strongly recommend that your pet is fully vaccinated with core vaccines at least two weeks prior to surgery** to reduce the risk of contracting a disease while in the clinic. Core vaccines for dogs are **Rabies** and **DHPP** (Distemper/Hepatitis/Parvovirus/Parainfluenza). Core vaccines for cats are **Rabies** and **FVRCP** (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis/Calicivirus/Panleukopenia). Vaccines can be obtained through your primary care veterinarian or by booking a wellness appointment.
- If your pet is not current on vaccinations at the time of surgery, we will administer the core vaccines. It is required to either have your pet vaccinated prior to surgery or consent to core vaccines administered during surgery.
- Additional vaccines such as Leptospirosis, Lyme, Bordetella, or FeLV are not required and are not offered at time of surgery.

Is bloodwork required or recommended?

- We do not provide preanesthetic bloodwork for young healthy pets with normal health exams. If you wish to obtain bloodwork prior to surgery, this will need to be done with your primary care veterinarian.
- Preanesthetic bloodwork is recommended for:
 - Pets 8 years of age and older
 - Pets with any symptoms of illness
 - Pets with abnormal findings on a physical exam
 - Pets who have arrived in Canada from an area with high rates of tick-borne disease. In this case, a tick-borne disease test (4DX) and complete blood count is recommended prior to surgery to check for an increased risk of bleeding.

What if my pet takes medication?

- Routine heartworm, flea, or tick prevention will not interfere with a spay or neuter surgery.



- If your pet is taking a chronic medication or will be on medication at the time of the surgery, please email csa@torontohumanesociety.com with the name of the medication and provide your pet's medical records for review. We will contact you to discuss further.

What if my pet does not have both testicles?

- Male cats and dogs with an undescended testicle (cryptorchid males) can still have surgery. There may be two or even three incisions made to locate and remove the testicle. It can be in the groin or in the abdomen. There is an additional fee for a cryptorchid male due to the additional surgical time required. Please note this when booking the appointment so that we can allocate the time needed for this procedure.

What if my pet needs an additional surgery?

- **UMBILICAL HERNIAS:** We DO offer hernia repair at the time of spay or neuter surgery for an additional fee. Whether a hernia repair is recommended or not depends on the size of the hernia and whether the contents of the hernia are moveable. This will be at the discretion of the veterinarian performing surgery.
- **DEW CLAWS:** We do NOT offer dew claw removal.
- **BABY TEETH:** We do NOT offer baby teeth (deciduous teeth) removal with spay or neuter surgery.
- **GASTROPEXY:** We do NOT offer gastropexy surgeries.

What breeds of dog are eligible?

- All breeds of dog are eligible, though there may be certain situations where a presurgical consult is recommended or you are asked to sign a supplemental consent form due to increased risk.
- Dogs with a short face (brachycephalic breeds) can be at increased risk of breathing problems before and after surgery due to their abnormal airway. You will be informed the morning of surgery if your pet is considered higher risk based on their breed. The brachycephalic breed dogs with the highest risk of anesthetic complications are **French Bulldogs, Pugs, and English Bulldogs**. For this reason, we require presurgical consults for these breeds to evaluate the severity of their breathing issues and discuss the associated risks.
- Doberman Pinschers have an increased risk of a genetic disorder called Von Willebrand's disease, which can cause excessive bleeding during surgery. We strongly recommend that Doberman patients receive a screening test for this disorder with your primary care veterinarian and send these results to our clinic prior to booking a surgery. If you are unable to obtain this test or choose not to, we will discuss the risks with you and ask you to sign a supplemental consent form. We will perform a bleeding test (Buccal Mucosal Bleeding Test) under anesthesia prior to performing surgery to check your pet's clotting ability. Please contact us at csa@torontohumanesociety.com with your pet's medical records if you have a purebred Doberman and are seeking spay/neuter surgery.
- Greyhounds can react atypically to anesthesia and anesthetic drugs. Please contact us at csa@torontohumanesociety.com with your pet's medical records if you have a purebred Greyhound and are seeking spay/neuter surgery.

What breeds of cat are eligible?

- All breeds of cats are eligible, though there may be certain situations where a presurgical consult is recommended or you are asked to sign a supplemental consent form due to increased risk.
- Cats with a short face (brachycephalic breeds) can be at increased risk of breathing problems before and after surgery due to their abnormal airway. You will be informed the morning of surgery if your pet is considered higher risk based on their breed. The brachycephalic breed cats with the highest risk of anesthetic complications are **Persians, Himalayans, and Exotic Shorthairs (please note this is a different breed than a British Shorthair)**. For this reason, we require presurgical consults for these breeds to evaluate the severity of their breathing issues and discuss the associated risks.



What if my pet is overweight or obese?

- Dogs and cats who are overweight or obese have an increased surgical and anesthetic risk. If your pet is considered overweight or obese, the veterinarian will advise you of the increased risk the morning of surgery. You may be asked to sign a supplemental consent form.

What if my pet is sick or has a chronic illness?

- This type of clinic is best suited for healthy cats and dogs undergoing routine surgeries and is not designed to serve the needs of high-risk patients.
- If your pet is sick, we recommend waiting until your pet is feeling better before scheduling a spay or neuter surgery. Please see your primary care veterinarian for testing and treatment.
- If your pet has a stable chronic illness and you are unable to obtain a spay or neuter surgery at your primary care veterinarian, please email csa@torontohumanesociety.com with your pet's full medical records and we will evaluate your situation to determine whether a surgery can safely be performed through our clinic.

What if my cat has FIV or FeLV?

- Cats with FIV or FeLV are eligible for surgery if they are generally in good health and feeling healthy the day of surgery. Please inform us that your pet has this condition.

What about pets recently brought into Canada from abroad?

- We recommend waiting at least 2 weeks after arriving in Canada before scheduling your pet for surgery to make sure your pet is healthy and not carrying any diseases.
- If your pet was born outside of Canada, please email csa@torontohumanesociety.com with information about where your pet was born and any medical records for your pet. Certain areas of the world, particularly warm climates, have very high rates of tick-borne diseases that can cause low platelet counts and increase the risk of bleeding during surgery. In these situations, we would recommend your pet have a tick-borne disease test and a complete blood count before proceeding with surgery.

What about pets who are fearful or aggressive at the veterinary clinic?

- If your primary care veterinarian has prescribed an anti-anxiety medication to use before visits, it is generally safe to give this the morning of surgery and helps make the process less stressful for your pet. Please email us at csa@torontohumanesociety.com and let us know which medication your veterinarian has prescribed so that we can confirm it is safe to give before surgery.
- If your pet is too fearful to receive a health evaluation awake, we can proceed with sedation and perform the exam under anesthesia prior to beginning surgery. This can increase the anesthetic risk as certain health conditions, such as a heart murmur, may be undetected prior to sedation. You may be asked to sign a supplemental consent form in this situation.
- If your pet is too fearful for our staff to safely handle, your pet will be prescribed anti-anxiety medications to take before a future visit, and your surgery will be rescheduled.

