

## **What is Spaying/Neutering?**

Spaying is a term for the surgical removal of the female reproductive organs (Ovaries, uterus and fallopian tubes.) Neutering is the surgical removal of the male reproductive glands (Testes.) Females and Males should be spayed or neutered by 6 months of age, and can be performed as early as 8 weeks of age. Both surgical procedures require minimal hospitalization and offer lifelong health benefits.

## **Why is it important?**

It is estimated that 6 – 8 million dogs and cats enter animal shelters every year in the United States. Out of those, approximately 3 – 4 million are euthanized. 60% of dogs and 70% of cats that enter shelters will be euthanized. Most of these are a result of unplanned litters that could have been prevented from spaying or neutering. There are not enough homes for all of these animals causing overpopulation. By having your pet spayed or neutered ensures you are not adding to the overpopulation epidemic.

## **What are the health and behavioral benefits?**

Having your pet spayed/neutered will help it live a longer, healthier life. Spaying your female before her first heat cycle will almost eliminate the risk of breast cancer and prevent uterine infections and cancer, diseases which are fatal in 50% of dogs and 90% of cats. It will also eliminate your female from going into heat as well as the associated behaviors that occur in the heat cycle which can include excessive howling and urination. Neutering males can prevent testicular cancer and enlargement of the prostate gland, as well as reducing the risk for perianal tumors especially if done before six months of age. By removing the instinctual need to find a mate in males, you can prevent certain undesirable behaviors such as urine marking, humping, male aggression and the urge to roam. If you have a multiple pet household, neutered pets will generally get along better as neutering can decrease aggressive tendencies.

## **Some Myths and Facts Surrounding Spaying/Neutering:**

**MYTH:** My pet will get fat and lazy.

**FACT:** The truth is that most pets get fat and lazy because their owners feed them too much and do not provide the pet with enough exercise. This has nothing to do with the pet's body's response to the procedure.

**MYTH:** It's better to have one litter first.

**FACT:** Medical evidence indicates just the opposite! In fact, the evidence shows that females spayed before their first heat are typically healthier and have a much reduced risk of many cancers and tumors. Many veterinarians now sterilize dogs and cats as young as eight weeks of age. Check with your veterinarian about the appropriate time for these procedures.

**MYTH:** My children should experience the miracle of birth.

**FACT:** Even if your children are able to see a pet give birth—which is unlikely, since it usually occurs at night and in seclusion—the lesson they will really learn is that companion animals can be created and discarded as it suits us humans. Instead, it should be explained to children that the real miracle is life of the animals you save by spay/neutering your pets and not adding to the over- population problem. If you insist on wanting your children to experience the miracle of birth, we'll give you a pregnant mother dog or cat to foster!

Thousands of pregnant mothers are surrendered and euthanized every year solely for that reason, they are pregnant! They cannot go into a kennel environment, so we are always looking for suitable foster homes for expecting mother dogs and cats.

**MYTH:** But my pet is a purebred.

**FACT:** So is at least one out of every four pets brought to animal shelters around the country. There are just too many dogs and cats—mixed breed and purebred.

**MYTH:** I don't want my male dog or cat to feel like less of a male.

**FACT:** Pets don't have any concept of sexual identity or ego. Neutering will not change a pet's basic personality. He doesn't suffer any kind of emotional reaction or identity crisis when neutered.

**MYTH:** But my dog (or cat) is so special, I want a puppy (or kitten) just like her.

**FACT:** A dog or cat may be a great pet, but that doesn't mean her offspring will be a carbon copy. Professional animal breeders who follow generations and generations of bloodlines can't guarantee they will get just what they want out of a particular litter. A novice pet owner's chances are even slimmer. Please leave the breeding to the professionals who are knowledgeable and care about the preservation of the breed.

**MYTH:** I'll find good homes for all the puppies and kittens.

**FACT:** You may find homes for all of your pet's litter. But each home you find means one less home for the dogs and cats in shelters who need good homes. Also, in less than one year's time, each of your pet's offspring may have his or her own litter, adding even more animals to the population. The problem of pet overpopulation is created and perpetuated one litter at a time.

**MYTH:** It's too expensive to have my pet spayed or neutered.

**FACT:** The cost of spaying or neutering depends on the sex, size, and age of the pet, your veterinarian's fees, and a number of other variables. But whatever the actual price, spay or neuter surgery is a one-time cost—a relatively small cost when compared to all the benefits. It's a bargain compared to the cost of two months of pregnancy, having a litter and ensuring the health of the mother and litter; and another two months until the litter is weaned. This can all add up to significant veterinary bills and food costs, and that's not including the costs if complications develop! Most importantly, it's a very small price to pay for the health of your pet and the prevention of the births of more unwanted pets.

Many states and counties have low-cost spay/neuter programs to make surgery affordable and accessible.

Here are some in NJ:

NJ State Discount Spay/Neuter: [www.state.nj.us/health/cd/izdp/spayneut.shtml](http://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/izdp/spayneut.shtml)

Visit People For Animals, Hillside NJ [www.pfaonline.org](http://www.pfaonline.org)

Friends of Animals: [www.friendsofanimals.org/programs/spay-neuter/](http://www.friendsofanimals.org/programs/spay-neuter/)