

# Don't Litter

## To Breed or Not to Breed?

One of the most important decisions a new pet owner has to make is whether or not to have the pet spayed or neutered. Many people decide that they want to breed their pet and end up with more problems than they had anticipated. Before you decide to breed your pet, you must be ready to deal with complications should they arise.

Complications with your female pet include life threatening uterine infections, difficult deliveries that can result in C-sections, and increased chances of mammary cancer. You must also consider that a female dog will come into heat about every 6 months, and female cats will usually stay in heat until bred.

Male dogs and cats that are not neutered also have some problems you need to consider. Male dogs are very prone to testicular cancer and they often have undesirable traits such as aggression, marking territory, roaming, and fighting. Male cats frequently mark their territory. Their urine has an exceptionally strong odor. They also tend to fight with other cats, which greatly increases their chances of contracting deadly diseases such as FIV and Leukemia.

Dogs and cats that breed are at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

You also will have to consider care for the puppies and kittens such as deworming, vaccinations, the cost of care and finding good homes.

Before breeding, your pet should also be evaluated for hidden hereditary problems such as hip dysplasia, demodectic mange, kidney or liver problems, and heart defects.

## Myths Busted!!

There are many common myths associated with having your pets spayed and neutered. Spaying and neutering your pet does not cause laziness or hyperactivity. Pets are usually spayed and neutered just prior to the onset of adult-hood, therefore it is coincidence that they outgrow their puppy/kitten behaviors just after neutering. It does not cause immature behaviors or alter a pet personality in any manner (other than usually reducing aggressive behaviors.) It does not postpone normal behavioral maturity. Pets that are spayed and neutered will have healthier lives and overall live longer than those that are not altered.

## Spaying Your Female Pet

Spaying a female dog and cat involves the removal of the ovaries and uterus. This will eliminate the possibilities of ovarian and uterine infection or cancer.

Bacterial infection of the uterus (pyometra) commonly afflicts older unspayed cats and dogs. In its advanced stages, pyometra causes general illness and kidney failure. If the uterus ruptures the animal will probably die. Pyometra requires emergency spaying, which still may not save the animal. The best preventive care is to spay dogs and cats when they are young and healthy.

Spaying can also prevent mammary gland tumors, the most common tumor in unspayed female dogs and the third most common tumor in cats. They are more common in dogs than they are in humans. Once a cancerous mammary tumor spreads to the bones or lungs, the cancer will be fatal. An unspayed dog is 200 times more likely to develop mammary cancer than a dog spayed before her first heat cycle. An unspayed cat is 7 times more likely than a spayed cat to develop mammary cancer.

Spayed dogs and cats also avoid the dangers of giving birth. A narrow birth canal or inadequate body size can sometimes make giving birth perilous.

Female dogs which have not been spayed generally go through 2 heat cycles a year, lasting about 3 weeks each time. During their heat cycle, they will pass bloody vaginal fluid, so extra care must be taken to prevent carpet and furniture stains.

Unspayed female cats will experience heat cycles for 10 months of the year. When in heat, cats will yowl loudly and continually during any hour of the day or night. Females in heat will attract many male dogs and cats to your house, which can become a nuisance.

## **Neutering Your Male Dog**

Neutering a male dog is the removal of the testicles, which prevents testicular tumors and greatly reduces the risk of developing rectal and prostate tumors.

A dog which develops a testicular tumor must be treated before it spreads. The only effective means, if caught in time, is neutering. Testicular tumors are especially prevalent in older dogs and are the second most common tumor in male dogs.

Enlargement of the prostate gland affects over 60% of unneutered male dogs over 5 years old; Prostatic enlargement predisposes a dog to prostate and urinary tract infections, which can make urinating difficult and painful. This can cause a system-wide infection. Because prostatic enlargement is caused by the male hormone testosterone, and testosterone is produced by the testicles, neutering acts as both a preventative measure and a treatment.

Additionally, by eliminating the sexual drive that can cause a dog to bolt from the yard or house, neutering helps protect dogs from injuries associated with roaming, such as being hit by a car or infections transmitted by other animals. In many male dogs, neutering reduces or eliminates the sexual mounting behavior and territorial marking with their urine (even those that have originally been housebroken). Male dogs that are not neutered will also show more of an aggressive personality. They can even be aggressive with their owners, even if they are usually not.

## **Neutering Your Male Cat**

As with male dogs, neutering involves the removal of the testicles, which eliminates the risk of testicular cancer. Most male cats that are not neutered do not live old enough to develop testicular cancer. They usually meet their fate due to other reasons caused by male hormones.

An urge to mate increases the chances that a male cat will slip out of the house and suffer fight wounds or traffic injuries. Male cats that are not neutered commonly fight other cats, in which the resulting wounds develop into abscesses. These abscesses must be drained, flushed, and treated with antibiotics.

Worse, even a single bite can transmit deadly diseases, such as Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) or Feline Leukemia. FIV and Feline Leukemia affect a cat's immune system and are both fatal because there is no cure. As with male dogs, male cats will mark their territory by spraying their urine. The smell of an unneutered male cat is nearly impossible to eliminate due to the very strong odor. If a male cat sprays one time in a house, the odor will be present in the entire house. Even spraying outdoors causes a stench. Neutering eliminates the urge to spray and also eliminates the overwhelming odor.

## **Help End The Problem**

There is a huge pet overpopulation problem in this country, and every litter born contributes to this problem.

On average, for each pet adopted into a new home, 9 animals are euthanized because there are not enough homes for them.

Each day in the U.S., 70,000 puppies and kittens are born while only 10,000 humans are born. Nationwide, over 1,000,000 animals are destroyed simply because they don't have homes. This

number does not include the stray dogs and cats that starve to death, are hit by a car, attacked by dogs and wild animals, or suffer otherwise due to being a stray.

Please do not fool yourself into thinking that if you can find a home for each of your pet's offspring you avoid adding to the number of homeless pets. Usually, you have only eliminated potential homes for other waiting dogs and cats. Only so many responsible caring homes exist, and finding homes for one of your pet's offspring just prevents some other dog or cat from finding a nice home.

## **The Surgery**

Many pet owners are concerned with their pet having surgery. Thousands of companion animals are spayed and neutered every day. Both operations are low-risk procedures, especially if done at a young age (4- 6 months old is ideal).

Once your appointment date is set, you will be instructed to withhold food and water overnight before the surgery. Usually, your pet will stay one night at the clinic and can go home the following day. Male cats that are neutered can go home that evening. Just as in humans, placing a pet under anesthesia always involves a slight risk. However, the risk of your pet developing mammary or testicular cancer is extraordinarily higher.

During the procedure, your pet's heart and respiratory rate will be monitored as well as depth of anesthesia. The Flanary Veterinary Clinic offers Sevoflurane, the safest anesthesia available. Sevoflurane is a gas anesthetic and is used by hospitals for infants. Sevoflurane enters and exits the body very rapidly, allowing for better control during surgery. Thanks to this speed, Sevoflurane allows your pet to return to a normal awake-state sooner. Sevoflurane also has a sweet and agreeable smell, which allows your pet to fall asleep easier and quicker with minimal stress.

Please talk to Dr. Flanary or the staff if you have any questions or hesitations about your pet's surgery.

## **Testing Is Necessary**

Before your pet is placed under anesthesia, blood tests are performed to ensure that your pet can properly process and eliminate the anesthesia. These tests will confirm that your pet's organs are functioning properly and to reveal any hidden health conditions that could put your pet at risk.

Blood testing also determines if your pet's blood will clot normally, which is very important prior to any surgery. Testing can significantly reduce medical risks and ensure your pet's health and safety.

Pets can't always tell us when they don't feel well. A healthy-appearing pet might be hiding symptoms of a disease or ailment. For example, a pet can lose up to 75% of kidney function before showing any visible signs. Testing can detect this much earlier.

If preanesthetic test results are not within normal ranges, we can alter the anesthetic procedure, or take other precautions to safeguard your pet's health and reduce the risk of potential complications. Not only is testing a must before surgery, it is also beneficial to your pet's future health. These tests provide baseline levels for your pet and become part of their medical record for future reference.

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