

Myths and Facts About Spaying and 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 don't give them enough exercise.

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. 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: *"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 want my dog to be protective."*

FACT: Spaying or neutering does not affect a dog's natural instinct to protect home and family. A dog's personality is formed more by genetics and environment than by sex hormones.

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: *"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 having a litter and ensuring the health of the mother and litter; two months of pregnancy and another two months until the litter is weaned can add up to significant veterinary bills and food 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.


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.



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Spaying & Neutering



Arlington Animal Services

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Spaying & Neutering

Why is spaying and neutering such an important issue? Because in seven years, one female cat and her offspring can theoretically produce 420,000 cats; in six years, one female dog and her offspring can theoretically produce 67,000 dogs.

The Humane Society of the United States estimates the number of cats and dogs entering shelters each year to be between eight and ten million, with four to five million of those animals being euthanized.

As a nation, we claim to love cats and dogs. Millions of households have pets, and billions of dollars are spent yearly on pet supplies and food. But as a nation, we should take a hard, sobering look at a different annual statistic: the millions of dogs and cats given up to shelters or left to die on the streets.

And the numbers tell only half the story. Every cat or dog who dies as a result of pet overpopulation—whether humanely in a shelter or by injury, disease, or neglect—is an animal who, more often than not, would have made a wonderful companion, if given the chance. Tremendous as the problem of pet overpopulation is, it can be solved if each of us takes just one small step, starting with not allowing our animals to breed.

Here's information about this crisis and why spaying and neutering is the first step to a solution.

Why You Should Spay or Neuter Your Pet

■ What do “spay” and “neuter” really mean

Female dogs and cats are spayed by removing their reproductive organs, and male dogs and cats are neutered by removing their testicles. In both cases the operation is performed while the pet is under anesthesia. Depending on your pet's age, size, and health, he or she will stay at your veterinarian's office for a few hours or a few days. Depending upon the procedure, your pet may need stitches removed after a few days. Your veterinarian can fully explain spay and neuter procedures to you and discuss with you the best age at which to sterilize your pet.

■ Spaying or Neutering Is Good for Your Pet

- Spaying and neutering helps dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives.
- Spaying and neutering can eliminate or reduce the incidence of a number of health problems that can be very difficult or expensive to treat.
- Spaying eliminates the possibility of uterine or ovarian cancer and greatly reduces the incidence of breast cancer, particularly when your pet is spayed before her first estrous cycle.
- Neutering eliminates testicular cancer and decreases the incidence of prostate disease.

Spay or neuter surgery carries a one-time cost that is relatively small when one considers its benefits. It's a small price to pay for the health of your pet and the prevention of more unwanted animals.

■ Spaying or Neutering Is Good for You

- Spaying and neutering makes pets better, more affectionate companions.
- Neutering cats makes them less likely to spray and mark territory.
- Spaying a dog or cat eliminates her heat cycle. Estrus lasts an average of six to 12 days, often twice a year, in dogs and an average of six to seven days, three or more times a year, in cats. Females in heat can cry incessantly, show nervous behavior, and attract unwanted male animals.
- Unsterilized animals often exhibit more behavior and temperament problems than do those who have been spayed or neutered.
- Spaying and neutering can make pets less likely to bite.
- Neutering makes pets less likely to roam the neighborhood, run away, or get into fights.

■ Spaying and Neutering Fosters Livable Neighborhoods

- Communities spend millions of dollars to control unwanted animals.
- Irresponsible breeding contributes to the problem of dog bites and attacks.
- Animal shelters are overburdened with surplus animals.
- Lost pets and homeless animals get into trash containers, defecate in public areas or on private lawns, and frighten or anger people who have no understanding of their misery or needs.
- Some lost animals also scare away or kill birds and wildlife.