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# Spays and Neuters

## Definitions

- **Spay:** The surgical removal of the uterus and ovaries to provide permanent sterilization and elimination of heat cycles in the female dog and cat.
- **Neuter:** The surgical removal of the testicles and spermatic cord to provide a permanent sterilization of the male dog and cat.

## Health Benefits

- Female pets that are spayed before their first heat cycle have a significantly lower incidence of mammary (breast) cancer later in life.
- Intact dogs and cats are at risk for a life threatening infection of the uterus called *pyometra*. Spaying virtually eliminates the risk of this disease.
- Ovarian and uterine cancers rarely occur in spayed animals.
- Transitional venereal tumors (a tumor of the oral or genital mucous membranes) are diagnosed much less frequently in dogs that are spayed or neutered.
- Urinary tract infections occur more frequently in pets that remain intact.
- The difficulties and complications of pregnancy, including mastitis, dystocia (difficult delivery) and obligatory Cesarean sections only occur in pets that are not spayed.
- Neutering male pets eliminates the risk of testicular cancer and greatly reduces the risk of prostate disease (including prostatitis, prostate cancer and enlarged prostate). Prostatic disease may cause constipation, ribbon-like stool or straining to urinate.
- Pets who have at least one retained testicle are at even greater risk for testicular cancer (risk increases by 75%) or testicular torsion (a painful twisting and swelling of the retained testicle).



## Behavioral Benefits

- Spaying and neutering greatly reduces aggression, territoriality and urine marking in dogs and cats.
- Dogs that are spayed or neutered are less likely to roam or attempt to escape from a yard by digging or jumping the fence; thus they are less likely to be hit by a car or accidentally poisoned while out roaming.
- Cats that are spayed or neutered are less likely to roam or fight with other cats.
- Intact animals have a quite offensive odor to their urine that is greatly reduced by spaying or neutering.

## Myths

- “*Animals that are spayed or neutered are more likely to be overweight*”. Although the procedure *may* decrease metabolism by taking away the hormonal urge to seek out a mate, animals become overweight by taking in too many calories and not exercising enough. Careful dietary planning and exercise routines will prevent weight gain in all animals, intact or not.
- “*Spaying or neutering will change my pet's personality*”. Most pets are spayed or neutered during adolescence, a time of maturation and personality change. The surgery itself does not change an animal's personality.
- “*A pet should have one litter before being spayed*”. Spaying before an animal's first heat cycle is very beneficial in eliminating some health problems later in life. There is no health or personality benefit to allowing a pet to have one litter before she is spayed.



## Pet Overpopulation

- Millions of homeless animals are euthanized (put to sleep) each year in the United States due to lack of homes.
- A fertile cat can produce an average of 3 litters a year with each litter having an average of 4-6 kittens.
- A fertile dog can produce an average of 2 litters a year with each litter having an average of 6-10 puppies.



## Breeding vs Neutering

If the answer to any of the following questions is 'No', we recommend having your dog spayed or neutered.

- Is your dog a Purebred?
- Did you get your dog from a breeder?
- Did you get a 3-5 generation pedigree with your dog?
- Are there at least 4 titled dogs (conformation, obedience, tracking, field, etc.) in the last three generations?
- Does your dog have a stable temperament?
- Does your dog fit the breed standard?
- Is your dog healthy and certified (OFA, CERF) free of genetic diseases?

If you answered 'Yes' to all of the above questions then your dog is of breeding quality. However, if you are not active in showing or working your dog, please think very carefully about your reason for breeding. Breeding should be done to **IMPROVE THE BREED**, not so the kids can see puppies being born, or because “you want a puppy from her”, and **NEVER** to make money selling puppies!

## Additional Information

- **Age:** Pets can be spayed or neutered at any age, but we recommend performing the surgery between four and six months of age, before the female's first heat cycle. *If you have an older pet, spaying and neutering is still beneficial for your pet!*
- **Anesthetic safety:** At Caring Hands Animal Hospital, we use the same state-of-the-art equipment and drugs you will find in a human hospital. General anesthesia always carries a small risk, but by performing physical exams, pre-anesthetic blood screening, and providing careful and continuous anesthetic monitoring, our skilled surgeons and staff greatly reduce the risk to your pet. Most pets are very stable during surgery and have a smooth recovery. Most animals are back to normal within 24-48 hours following surgery.
- **Facility Tours:** We invite our clients to tour our surgery and recovery facilities prior to their pet's anesthesia. If you would like a tour, please ask one of our staff members.