

Pawsitive Press

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Spaying and Neutering

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If you are like me, you look at your pet and think who wouldn't want one just like this! ☺ I feel like this is the number one reasons a lot of people assume they want to breed their pet rather than spaying or neutering. The second most common reason I hear for hesitation to spay and neuter is because owners think they are being unfair to their pet. Elective spay and neuter of dogs and cats is one of the most common veterinary procedures performed in the United States. Lately an increasing number of owners and veterinary professionals have started to question the optimal age for this and whether or not to have it done. I want to take this time to clear up any confusion there may be, and to address the pros and cons of spaying or neutering your pet.

The general consensus has always been that companion animals not intended for breeding should be spayed or neutered. Factors that we take into consideration when deciding when and if to spay/neuter are your pet's age, species, breed, sex, health status, intended use, household environment, and temperament. Most veterinarians have historically advised the age for elective

spay and neuter to be around six months, this being early enough to try and prevent unwanted sexual behaviors, and also being prior to the first estrus cycle in our female pets. Once coming into maturity pets can start to display unwanted behaviors such as mounting, urine marking/spraying, vocalizing and rubbing in the case of female cats, and sometimes evidence of dominance/aggression. If these type issues are a concern please discuss it with us so we can make a more informed decision of advises involving behavior management and best time to consider spay/neuter. Many people also worry about the risk of surgical complications. I guarantee you that though these are routine elective procedures, we take precautions to uphold the safety of your pet and see to it things go as smoothly as possible. Studies show there are a very low percentage of surgical complications, and most relate to aftercare such as the pet being too active, or causing self-trauma by licking.

While there are definite health benefits to

spaying and neutering, these must be weighed against the health benefits of the sex steroids (estrogen, testosterone, etc). Some of the advantages of spaying or neutering a pet include effective population control, decreased aggression, decreased wandering, decreased risk of uterine infection, decreased risk of mammary, testicular, and ovarian cancer. On the other hand, some disadvantages of spaying or neutering, especially at an early age, may include increased risk of conditions such as obesity, diabetes, certain cancers (osteosarcoma, hemangiosarcoma, prostatic adenocarcinoma, and transitional cell carcinoma), urinary tract infections, urinary incontinence, hypothyroidism, cruciate ligament tears, and hip dysplasia. As intact female pets age they are at higher risk of mammary cancer and uterine infections. Pyometra is an infection in the uterus, and can be fatal if not caught early. Emergency surgery is required to try and correct it. The increased likelihood of developing conditions such as pyometra and mammary cancer occur the older an animal is before it is spayed and the more heat cycles it has gone through. Mammary cancer is on average 50% malignant in dogs and as much as 90% in cats. In contrast to this, there is a higher incidence of prostatic

Spaying/Neutering Cont'd

cancer in neutered male dogs. Therefore by neutering early in dogs we may actually be increasing their risk of prostatic cancer. Our preference at this time is to allow female dogs to go through one, possibly two, heat cycles, so that we keep the sex hormones present longer to avoid the increased risk of diseases such as hypothyroidism, urinary incontinence, and certain cancers down the line, but not so long as to put them at increased risk for more serious conditions such as mammary cancer and pyometra. It is ideal to do this procedure at or shortly after 1 year of age. This complies with the recommendations of the College of American Theriogenologists and the Society for Theriogenology, two organizations comprised of veterinarians who specialize in reproductive medicine. For male dogs, neutering is not as much of a rush in terms of increased cancer risk, so we do prefer wait until at least a year to gain the benefit of the sex hormones and from there we discuss if and when to neuter case by case. Some recent information suggests that there may be benefit to keeping male dogs intact. Though diseases such as testicular cancer are possible, it is a small percentage and tends to not be metastatic, therefore surgery when discovered can often times be successful. The exception is in the case of cryptorchid males, meaning either one or both testicles fail

to descend. These males are at an increased risk of cancer the longer the retained testicle is kept in the body, and therefore we do advise neutering soon after one year. Due to the unwanted sexual behaviors and high fertility rate of cats, we do still advise spaying and neutering by six months in our feline patients.

Because every pet's needs and circumstances vary, we advise discussing your pet with us so we can best guide you. The balance of long-term health risks and benefits of spay/neuter will vary from one dog to the next. Breed, age, and gender are variables that must be taken into consideration for each individual pet. The decision when or if to spay or neuter is not always straight forward, and our decision will be dependent on each particular animal's situation. We at the Animal Hospital of Dunedin certainly want to act in the best interest of your pet now and for their future. By opening the lines of communication, together we can better make the most informed decision possible.



National Train Your Dog Month

The Importance of Socialization

In the age-old discussion of “Nature versus Nurture,” the fact is *both* are important. “Nature” is what your puppy or dog is born with, and “nurture” is what you provide for a happy, healthy, affectionate, well-adjusted, and well-mannered dog. A critical aspect of “nurture” is *socialization*. Its importance cannot be underrated in raising a psychologically healthy puppy. In fact, providing your puppy with a broad range of experiences prior to the age of four months of age has been proven to be one of the most critical factors in raising a stable, confident dog.

Socialization is introducing your puppy to a broad range of new experiences, people, environments and activities. While you likely can't expose a puppy to everything he or she may encounter in the future, the good news is that positive exposure to a wide variety of novel experiences results in a dog that easily adjusts to new things throughout his or her life. A well-socialized dog isn't frightened of something he or she may never have experienced previously. In other words, well-socialized dogs are more secure, confident and self-assured.

Socialization Includes:

- ✓ *People*—from infants to the elderly. Different ages, sizes, ethnicities; glasses, hats, mustaches and beards, different clothing—anything you can think of.
- ✓ *Places*—new environments such as urban areas, country settings and everything in between. Nothing attracts friendly people more than an adorable puppy, so taking your puppy to new places gets him used to loads of people, too. Visit friends' homes, your kids' soccer games, and take quiet walks in the park.
- ✓ *Things*—Dog-friendly cats and other pets, household appliances, cars, buses, fire hydrants, trees and flowers. Virtually everything may be new to your puppy, so don't be limited thinking that it's something he's likely seen before.
- ✓ *Activities*—Pleasant car rides, an elevator ride, and the like. And of course, Puppy Class is one of the best places to socialize. Plus you'll both learn a lot!

Safe Socialization

It's important that exposure to all these new and novel experiences is positive and without stress. Here are some guidelines to help keep things stress-free and constructive:

- ✓ Have fun! Your positive attitude toward new things is important for your puppy.
- ✓ Let your puppy approach new things on her own. Provide the opportunity for your puppy to investigate and let her take her time.
- ✓ Respect your puppy's feelings. Don't push or force your puppy if he's at all reluctant. Try laughing and interacting with the new object yourself, but ultimately err on the side of caution if your puppy thinks something is just too scary right now.

Use common sense and be careful that all experiences are positive. Avoid situations, people and environments that you think might result in a less-than-happy experience for your puppy. For example, in meeting a well-behaved child that wants to hold the puppy, have the child sit on the floor to avoid the possibility of a squiggly puppy falling from their arms and getting injured.

For more information about National Train your Dog Month or to find a trainer in your area visit:

<http://www.trainyourdogmonth.com/>

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\$1

First Exam - New Patient

(\$49-\$80 Savings)

Includes comprehensive physical exam and one vaccine. Does not include 3yr Rabies vaccine. Must be presented at the time of purchase. Coupon may not be combined with any other offer. Expires: 01/31/15 NL



Animal Hospital OF DUNEDIN
Caring for Pets with Love and Kindness.

2 Months Free Advantage Multi

(\$36.00 - \$42.00 savings)

Buy one 6 pack of Advantage Multi and get 2 months same size free. Patient must have been seen by a doctor at the Animal Hospital of Dunedin within the past year. May not be combined with any other offer. Coupon must be presented at the time of purchase. Expires 01/31/15 NL



Animal Hospital OF DUNEDIN
Caring for Pets with Love and Kindness.

\$10 Off

\$200 Retail Mix and Match

- *Shampoo
- *Food
- *Heartworm Prevention
- *Dietary Supplements
- *Flea and Tick Control

Coupon must be presented at the time of purchase. May not be combined with any other offer.
This coupon can not be applied to prescription medications other than heartworm/flea control Epiration 01/31/15 NL