

# Spaying and Neutering Cats and Dogs

Every year, thousands of unwanted kittens and puppies are born in Alberta. Although some of them may find new homes through the services of SPCA's and Humane Societies, those that are not adopted will, out of necessity, have to be euthanized by those same agencies. The truly unfortunate ones are those that are abandoned by their owners (a criminal offense). Many of these animals will die from accidents, disease, poison, or attacks by other animals. The obvious solution to this problem is for pet owners to spay and neuter their animals.

## Commonly asked questions about spaying and neutering:

### What exactly is Spaying and Neutering?

Spaying a female cat or dog involves the removal of the reproductive organs. The technical term is "ovario-hysterectomy". Neutering a male involves removal of the testicles. In both cases, the operations are carried out under general anesthetic and the animals recover quickly.

### When should I get my cat or dog spayed or neutered?

The operation can be done at any age, but to stop unwanted pregnancies, spaying and neutering should be done early in a pet's life. Your veterinarian will advise you on the best time to spay or neuter your pet.

### Will my pet behave or look differently afterwards?

Spaying or neutering may have a slight effect on a pet's personality, but most owners think this is for the better.

## Cats

Un-neutered male tom-cats tend to be wanderers, getting into fights which can lead to injury and infected wounds. They also "spray" - marking out their territory with an unpleasant (and difficult to remove) smell. In addition to being noisy and demonstrating anxious behavior, a female cat in heat will attract un-neutered male cats from far and wide. The resultant spraying, yowling, and fighting can be a nuisance to both her owners and surrounding neighbors. Once she is spayed, these problems will cease to exist. (Note: an un-spayed female cat can have up to three pregnancies a year, averaging five to six kittens per litter.)

## Dogs

Un-neutered male dogs tend to be more aggressive than their neutered counterparts, getting into fights more often. An un-spayed female dog will come into heat twice a year, for about three weeks each time. When in heat, she will attract un-neutered male dogs to her owner's front door. She will be anxious to escape, and as a result, may be difficult to control.

For both cats and dogs, an additional benefit of spaying and neutering is that the animal is no longer subject to disease of the reproductive organs.

### Will spaying or neutering make my pet fat?

No. Pets usually get fat through a combination of overeating and insufficient exercise.

### Isn't it best to let my pet have one litter before being spayed?

No, this is a myth. There is no good reason for letting a dog or cat produce an unwanted litter.

### Wouldn't it be valuable for my children to witness the "miracle of birth"?

Try balancing whatever value might be gained from such an experience with the knowledge that death or abandonment awaits many unwanted kittens and puppies. It is much more valuable for children to experience the responsibilities of pet ownership by learning to care properly for a valued family pet. Producing a litter for "educational" purposes is irresponsible.