

Spaying and Neutering

Every year, millions of unwanted dogs and cats, including puppies and kittens, are needlessly euthanised. The good news is that every pet owner can make a difference. By having your dog or cat surgically sterilised, you will do your part to prevent the birth of unwanted dogs and cats.

Spaying is the surgical removal of the female animal's reproductive organs and neutering is the surgical removal of a male animal's testicles. Sterilisation helps your pet live a healthier life, as sterilised pets are less prone to certain diseases.

Why should You Spay / Neuter Your Pet?

- To prevent unwanted litters. Dealing with unexpected or unwanted litters can be traumatic for pet owners and pets alike, often



Spaying and neutering will play a crucial role in preventing unwanted litters which could eventually end up at animal shelters.

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resulting in unforeseen costs.

- Arrangements need to be made to find suitable homes for puppies or kittens.
- South African shelters are flooded with unwanted dogs or cats requiring care.
- Spaying and neutering are the most effective measures to combat the surge in unwanted pets. Thousands of pets have to be euthanised annually as shelters can no longer accommodate them.
- Your pet will be more content. An unsterilised pet is often anxious and frustrated. He or she may pace or whine, or act aggressively or inappropriately towards furniture or people.
- It increases your pet's life expectancy. Spaying at an early age eliminates the chance of contracting uterine infection (pyometra) and reduces the likelihood of mammary cancer. Neutering at an early age can also prevent testicular cancer and reduces the chances of prostate cancer.
- It prevent additional expenses. The cost of sterilisation is minor compared to the cost of feeding and raising litters. Even if all goes well, the veterinary care of the female animal and her litter will be substantial. Another thing pet owners have to consider is additional costs if everything does not go according to plan. Problems during delivery could lead to a Caesarean section, loss of puppies or even the death of the mother.
- A sterilised pet often requires fewer vet bills.
- It reduces the possibility of straying, the male getting into fights or your pet being run over by a motor vehicle, which can be costly in terms of veterinary fees.
- It prevents mating with females 'in season' in your neighbourhood and minimises or eliminates the possibility of the male contracting a sexually transmitted disease.
- It can also lower the dog's general activity level

which can be advantageous with certain breeds, such as Boxers.

- The dog or cat can become more affectionate with the owners, children and other pets. It can minimise or eliminate bad habits such as jumping over fences, chasing cars, wandering off or urinating in the house.
- It reduces and even eliminates 'cat choruses' which are usually caused by unneutered males challenging each other for females 'in season' or for territory (i.e. minimises sexual and territorial aggression).



Myths about Spaying and Neutering

Getting my pet sterilised will change their personality.

Your pet's personality is dependent on their genetics, not their hormones. The only changes you will see in your pets as a result of sterilisation are beneficial behavioural changes, like less spraying and fighting.

Spaying and neutering will cause my pets to gain weight.

A lack of exercise and overfeeding will cause your pet to pack on the extra pounds, not spaying and neutering. As any animal matures, its diet and activity level need to be adjusted in order to maintain their ideal body weight.

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Neutering will make my pet feel like less of a male.

Pets do not have any concept of sexual identity or ego, and neutering will not change a pet's basic personality. Pets do not suffer any kind of emotional reaction or identity crisis when neutered.

It's better to have one litter before spaying a female pet.

There is no medical benefit to allowing one litter or a heat cycle prior to spaying. In fact, studies have shown that spaying before their first heat cycle drastically reduces dogs' and cats' risk of developing mammary tumours, breast and uterine cancer.

Spaying and neutering are risky and painful for my pet.

Spaying and neutering are standard surgical procedures carried out by veterinarians every day. Your pet will be under general anaesthetic and while any operation carries some risk, it's much safer for a younger pet to go under anaesthetic than it is for older pets, should they face health problems due to being unsterilised. Your pet may experience mild discomfort but will receive pain relief to keep them comfortable and will return to normal within 24 to 72 hours.

Spaying and neutering are unhealthy for pets.

Just the opposite! Sterilisation will help your pet live a longer, healthier life. Neutering your male companion prevents testicular cancer and some prostate problems. Spaying helps prevent uterine infections, ovarian cancer and breast tumours (which are malignant or cancerous in about 50% of dogs and 90% of cats).

Spaying and neutering operations are expensive.

The cost of your pet's spaying/neutering surgery is far less than the cost of having, caring for and feeding a litter of puppies or kittens. Many other organisations offer free or low-cost spaying and neutering services for pet owners who are unable to afford private vet fees.

I want my dog to be protective.

Your dog will not be less protective after being sterilised. It is a dog's natural instinct to protect its home and family. A dog's personality is formed more by genetics and environment than by sex hormones.

It's not natural to spay and neuter.

The domestication of pets removed them from the natural order and placed responsibility for their care on humans. What's not natural is to euthanise millions of healthy dogs and cats for a lack of good homes.

But my pet is so special, I want a puppy/kitten just like it.

Your pet's puppies or kittens have a slim chance of being a carbon copy of your pet.

I've got an indoor pet, so sterilisation isn't necessary

While your pet might not be at risk of getting pregnant or fathering a litter, sterilising is not just about stopping your pet from having babies. It greatly reduces the risk of your pet suffering from medical diseases and it is an important step towards giving your pet a happy, healthy life.



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Caring for Your Pet after Spaying and Neutering

- After major surgery it is vital that you allow your pet to recuperate. Keeping them in a relaxing, confined space for at least a week will speed up the recovery process.
- Your pet will occasionally lick its wound. Try to discourage this, but if you notice that the wound is red or swollen, please bring it in for a check-up. It is also important that your pet stays out of water (no swimming) until the wound has healed and the stitches have been removed.
- If your female was on heat when spayed and was not hospitalised subsequent to the operation, it is very important that she be isolated from males for at least a week as she will still be attractive to the opposite sex. If mating occurs at this stage, it could cause serious injury to your pet.
- Sterilisation removes an entire organ system (the ovaries and uterus of the female and the testicles of the male). This organ system is incredibly energy-dependent. When they are removed, most owners still feed the same amount of food, yet their pet's metabolic needs are much lower (15–20% lower). After sterilising or neutering your pet, you should thus feed them less. Start with 15% less and adjust, as needed.

Supporting the Need to Spay and Neuter Pets

Approximately 1 million dogs and cats are euthanised per year in South Africa alone. The shelters DO NOT want to do it, but they do not have other options.



One Female Cat

and her offspring can theoretically produce over

420,000 KITTENS
in seven years!

One Female Dog

and her offspring can theoretically produce over

96,000 PUPPIES
in seven years!

SOURCE: www.arenacountytni.gov

