

NEUTERING YOUR CAT

Why should I have my cat neutered?

The medical term for neutering the male cat is castration, orchidectomy or orchiectomy. During that procedure, the testicles are removed.



What are the advantages of neutering my male cat?

- The obvious – preventing unwanted kittens, when they are killed by the millions in shelters in the US every year. Many times, you can't find good homes even if you give them away.
- Reduces the risk of prostatitis
- Eliminates the risk of testicular cancer
- Removal of sexual urges, which usually decreases roaming behaviors, and fighting.
- Reduction of certain types of aggression, inappropriate mounting, and problems with urine marking.
- Improves the very strong smell of tomcat urine.

Is neutering performed for any other reason?

The operation may be performed to treat testicular tumors and some prostate gland conditions. As the tomcat reaches sexual maturity, he will start to enlarge his territory, straying ever farther from the house, particularly at night. It is for this reason that many of the cats that are hit by automobiles are non-neutered males. By increasing the size of his territory, he increases the likelihood that he will come into contact with other cats and will get into fights for territorial dominance. Inflicted fight wounds can result in severe infections and abscesses. Diseases such as FIV and FeLV, which can cause AIDS-like syndromes and cancers in cats, are spread through cat bites, these cats are most commonly affected by potentially incurable diseases.

What are the disadvantages?

Obesity is probably the most commonly quoted disadvantage of neutering. There is no question that the metabolic rate is decreased after neutering, and a neutered cat tends to need fewer calories each day than a tomcat. Obesity is the result of overfeeding and not exercising enough. By regulating your cat's diet and caloric intake, you can prevent obesity in neutered or intact males.

Neutering doesn't cause a change in personality, intelligence, playfulness or affection. Neutered male cats do tend to look differently than those allowed to reach sexual maturity prior to neutering – those neutered younger are taller and more slender in appearance, and lack the tomcat jowls. Many years ago, it was believed that kittens neutered at a young age will have a narrowed urethra that will predispose them to urinary blockage. Early neutering does not seem to be a significant factor in this syndrome.

When should the operation be performed?

Most veterinarians recommend neutering at around six months of age. Several studies show that when all is considered, neutered male cats live 62% longer (5-6 years) than tomcats. In most cases, it is recommended to neuter your cat before the onset of puberty. Puberty normally begins between six and ten months of age.

Is there any alternative to surgery?

There have been recent advances in non-surgical neutering in dogs, but these methods are not yet approved for the cat.

Are there any dangers associated with the operation?

The feline neuter is one of the simplest surgical procedures performed in all of veterinary medicine. With modern anesthetics and monitoring equipment, the risk of a complication is very low. With modern anesthetics and monitoring equipment, the risk of a complication is very low. Minor complications occur at a rate of 3-5% and major complications at a rate of 0.3-0.5%. Death due to spay is not impossible, but it is extremely rare. It has been said that your pet has a greater chance of being injured in a car wreck than having an anesthetic or surgical complication.

What happens when my dog undergoes this procedure?

Make sure you take up all food after dinner time the night before surgery. There is no need to withhold water – we will take up the water when you bring your cat in on the morning of surgery, prior to 9am. Your pet will be examined by your veterinarian and pre-anesthetic blood tests will occasionally be performed. If everything is acceptable, your pet will then be anesthetized. The surgery consists of making a small incision in the scrotum over each testicle, and removing the testicles. Most of the time, no sutures are necessary. Your pet will need to stay indoors the night after surgery, in a place that is warm, dry and supervised. Many vets prefer to send patients home the evening after surgery, and others allow them to go home, if adequate after-care can be provided at home.

Are there any post-operative precautions I should take?

The evening after surgery, small amounts of water or ice cubes can be offered, as long as there is no vomiting. Nausea and vomiting for about 12 hours after anesthesia is not uncommon. The following morning, a small meal can be offered, and after that you can gradually return to normal feeding. Rest and restriction of activity are the primary post-operative care you should provide. Most cats can resume normal activity few days after surgery. You will get more specific instructions when you take your cat home after surgery.

In certain cats, notably the Siamese breed, the hair that grows back over an operation site may be noticeably darker, believed to be due to a difference in the skin temperature. This darker patch may grow out with the following molt as the hair is naturally replaced.

What if a cat has Undescended Testicle(s)?

The medical term for an undescended testicle is “cryptorchidism.” “Crypt” means hidden and “orchid” means testicle. Undescended testicles have an increased tendency to grow tumors. This procedure is more complicated than a routine neuter; the missing testicle can be under the skin in the groin along the path it should have descended to the scrotum, or it may be inside the abdomen. Some exploration may be needed to find it, thus there is often an incision for each testicle. The retained testicle is usually underdeveloped and may be sterile. If there is one descended testicle it will be fertile, but since retaining a testicle is a hereditary trait, it is important that the male cat not be bred before he is neutered.

References:

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