



Chastain Veterinary Medical Group Pet Health Fact Sheet

The Spay/Neuter Decision

De-sexing, sterilization, castration, “spaying” or “neutering”.

However it is said, just the thought is enough to make us squirm a little, isn't it?

Yep! We are veterinarians, but we do understand most people's discomfort with discussing the reproductive systems of their pets and the in-depth details of surgical procedures. But please do excuse us if we get a little technical. It is important for your pet that you understand certain key facts about these surgical procedures.

So here goes!

What's it all about?

Spaying is surgery to remove the female reproductive organs – i.e. the ovaries, the uterus and the fallopian tubes.

Neutering is surgery to remove the male reproductive glands, or testes.

Both spaying and neutering are fairly straightforward surgical procedures.

Why do it?

Quite simply, to prevent unwanted puppies or kittens, to avoid the mess of having a female dog bleed for several weeks while in heat, to avoid certain types of cancer and other problems and to spare your precious gal the unwanted attentions of interested male dogs or cats.

It is also done to avoid all those undesirable behaviors associated with “natural” animal sexuality such as territorial aggression, urine marking, fighting and straying . . . the list goes on!

But breeding is only natural!

Yes! It is only natural for our pets to breed and reproduce. That's exactly what Mother Nature intended. But unlike in the wild, where nature keeps the numbers down, if our pets were allowed to breed freely, things could get a little “crowded” in the living room - with cleanliness, hygiene and good taste going out

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the window as well.

Will it affect my pet's health?

Yes! Very definitely yes! And for the better! In fact, spaying or neutering will increase your pet's quality of life and quite possibly his or her life span as well. Here are just some of the good things.

No more hormonal urges to go looking for a mate. That means there's...

- Less interest in leaving home or wandering away
- Less chance of being hit by a car
- Less chance of being accidentally shot or poisoned
- Less chance of picking up a contagious disease
- Less chance of getting into a fight.

Will it help spare us "serious" medical problems?

Absolutely!

In males, neutering decreases the chances of developing testicular and perianal gland cancer, venereal tumors, perineal hernias and prostatic disease.

In females the list of benefits is huge. Spaying decreases the incidence of breast cancer (the rate goes down to almost zero if the spaying is done before the first heat cycle!) It protects against cystic endometrial hyperplasia, false pregnancies, breast tissue infection (mastitis, which can occur during false pregnancy), venereal tumors, ovarian and uterine tumors, cystic ovaries and hyperestrogenism, chronic endometritis, vaginal hyperplasia and prolapse and uterine torsion or uterine prolapse. Spaying also completely eliminates the chance of developing a serious and potentially fatal infection of the uterus called pyometra, which is experienced by many mature unspayed animals.

How about behavior?

Without the usual hormonal ups and downs and urges, gone is much of the urine marking, sniffing, licking, riding, rubbing, arousal and frustration that pets would otherwise experience. And with frustration gone, gone also are the snaps and growls and irritants. Perfectly natural for an animal in the wild but something most of us at home we can live without.

But what about...?

Yes! We know! Every proud pet owner – us included – feels that their pet is absolutely the greatest and everyone else wants one just like him or her!

Well, truth is - it just doesn't work that way!

Babies are seldom carbon copies of mum and dad. Genetics, individual circumstances, the family environment, and the general randomness of life all have their part to play in creating each individual pet.

So for that "love at first sight" experience, it's off to the nearest animal shelter!

Uh! Huh! What if my pet gets fat and lazy?

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Yes! Hormones perhaps drove your pet to roam and wander in search of a mate (or a good fight!) and kept him or her trim, taught and terrific! Obviously, without that hormonal drive there will be a little slowing down. However, good balanced diet and a 20-30 minute walk each day will fix any weight problems and you'll feel terrific! And hey! So will the furry one!

When should I have my pet “done”?

At Chastain Veterinary Medical Group (CVMG) at Preston Road Animal Hospital we feel that between 3 and 6 months of age is the ideal time for spaying and neutering. By 3 months of age your pet will have been dewormed, had his or her first distemper boosters and rabies vaccination and generally be in better shape to cope with the surgery. On the other hand, by six months of age, some females will already have begun to display signs of heat.

Be aware that recent scientific studies have shown that spaying and neutering can be done safely as early as 8 weeks of age, or at almost any age for older pets. So for those who want to get it over with early, we're ready for you. And for those who may have let time slip by, it's never too late!

Yes, female pets can be spayed during pregnancy or in heat but it is a slightly more complicated procedure, it takes longer, requires more materials and can therefore cost more. Spaying is much simpler before her first litter or, better still, before her first heat cycle.

Where?

Since spaying and neutering are surgical procedures that your pet will have done only once in their lives, we're sure you'll agree with us that it is important that they are done right. Therefore, we recommend that you look for a small animal veterinarian – like us at CVMG - whose facilities and methods have been reviewed, approved and certified by the American Animal Hospital Association.

The **American Animal Hospital Association** (AAHA) is an international organization of more than 22,000 veterinary care providers committed to excellence in small animal care. Through a wide variety of inspections, certifications and services, AAHA offers member veterinarians tools to help them continuously excel in delivering high quality care for pets.

Established in 1933, the association is well known among veterinarians for its demanding standards of veterinary care. As part of our long term commitment to the health and happiness of pets and their people, we at Chastain Veterinary Medical Group have been certified members of the American Animal Hospital Association since 1960. Upholding the AAHA standards of pet medical care isn't easy, but we've never felt that doing things the easy way was as important as doing them the right way.

At Chastain Veterinary Medical Group, sterilization surgery is always performed under general anesthetic by a skilled veterinarian with one or two trained surgical assistants. Most surgical incisions are made using a state-of-the-art CO2 surgical laser, which reduces bleeding, swelling and post-operative pain. This speeds up your pet's recovery and return to well being.

To help increase patient safety, we always perform a pre-surgical physical exam and an ECG screening before surgery. We also recommend optional pre-anesthetic screening blood tests and intra-op fluid therapy.

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Pre-anesthetic blood tests and intra-op fluid therapy are optional but we really do feel they are well worth the extra cost, and not only for peace of mind.

During the operation, we electronically monitor body temperature, heart rate, respiratory rate, cardiac electrical activity and blood oxygen levels. And since no machine is a reliable substitute for a concerned eye and a caring touch, one or two trained veterinary nurses are always at hand to assist the surgeon, monitor the telemetry and help monitor and care for the patient

At CVMG, we believe strongly in the importance of post operative pain relief for our patients. We feel that pain relief not only increases our patient's general sense of comfort but also encourages a more rapid recovery. To help make this as simple as we can, we have developed several post-op pain relief options. We will find the right pain relief option to keep your pet comfortable and still fit your budget.

How much?

At Chastain Veterinary Medical Group we always tailor the surgery to suit the needs of each pet and to fit the pet owner's particular circumstances and preferences.

To get started, we will need to know what species your pet is, how big or small (smaller pets need less anesthetic and less surgery time), and if it is male or female (if female, is she pregnant or in heat?). Then we will describe the surgery to you in more detail and go on to discuss specific pain control and anesthetic safety options that you may wish to consider to make certain your pet is as comfortable and safe as possible.

Please contact our office for a customized cost estimate.

Can it wait?

Ouch! The clock is ticking!

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