



Spaying and Neutering Your Pet

Wondering if you should spay or neuter your pet? Here's what you should know:

Why Spay or Neuter?

Spaying (female pets) and neutering (male pets) are important steps in promoting your pet's long-term health and helping reduce pet overpopulation.

Common reasons people hesitate include:

- Plans to breed or show the pet
- Financial concerns
- Fear of anesthesia
- Uncertainty about the benefits

While these concerns are understandable, the **benefits far outweigh the risks** — even if your pet is older. Spaying or neutering greatly reduces the risk of life-threatening infections and certain cancers.

Today's anesthetic safety standards, paired with pre-operative bloodwork, help minimize anesthesia risks. And for those concerned about cost, there are many affordable spay/neuter clinics — and the cost is far less than treating emergency health issues later.

Health Benefits of Spaying/Neutering

- **Spaying** drastically lowers the risk of mammary (breast) cancer — fatal in about 50% of dogs and 90% of cats.
- **Spaying** eliminates the risk of pyometra, a life-threatening uterine infection requiring emergency surgery.
- **Spaying** prevents messy, stressful heat cycles.
- **Neutering** eliminates the risk of testicular cancer.
- **Neutering** reduces undesirable behaviors like roaming, indoor marking, and aggression.
- **Both** procedures help control pet overpopulation, reducing the number of unwanted litters.

When Should My Pet Be Spayed or Neutered?

There is still limited data concerning the correct age to spay or neuter pets. There is some data indicating that some cancers, orthopedic diseases, endocrine disorders, obesity and urinary incontinence may be linked to spaying or neutering dogs and the age at which it was performed. More research is needed to understand breed association to these risks, although it appears these risks tend to be more linked to large or giant breed dogs. Generally the American Animal Hospital Association guidelines recommend the following:

- **Cats:**

Best spayed or neutered at **4–5 months of age**, before the first heat cycle. This protects against mammary cancer and prevents unwanted litters.

- **Small-breed dogs (under 60 lbs):**

Spay or neuter around **6 months of age**.

- **Large-breed dogs (over 60 lbs):**

Waiting until **9–15 months** (after growth is complete) may offer health benefits, such as reduced orthopedic issues.

Some females benefit from being spayed **after their first heat**.

Talk to your veterinarian to find the best plan for your pet's individual needs!