

## **Benefits of Spaying and Neutering Your Pet**

### **Spaying:**

The principal benefit of spaying female dogs and cats is the prevention of mammary cancer. A dog spayed before her first heat will have a near zero chance of developing mammary cancer later in life. After the first heat, this incidence climbs to 7 percent, and after the second heat the risk approaches 25 percent. Statistics are similar in cats.

The prevention of what is frequently a very difficult and potentially fatal form of cancer is reason enough to spay our dogs. Another potential condition in intact females is a bacterial infection of the uterus called pyometra. Treatment is surgery in a potentially unstable patient and can be very costly.

Less common conditions such as uterine and ovarian cancer are 100 percent prevented by spaying. Intact females come into heat about every 5-6 months, resulting in bloody vaginal discharge and an unpleasant odor.

The reproductive tracts of the female dog and cat are dormant for most of the year. From a behavioral standpoint, the animals will "act spayed" most of the time and no personality changes should be noted with spaying. When in heat, females are more likely to be aggressive and can show erratic behavior such as howling and writhing on the ground.

### **Neuters:**

The major health benefits involved in neutering a dog involve the prostate gland. As dogs age, the prostate will gradually enlarge. This is known as benign prostate hyperplasia or BPH. The prostate under the influence of testosterone is also predisposed to infection. This is an extremely painful and sometime life-threatening condition which is not likely to resolve without neutering and often invasive surgery.

Other medical conditions that are prevented include testicular cancer, along with certain types of hernias and perianal tumors. The effects of neutering male cats are more behavioral. There are no concrete facts when it comes to the behavioral changes seen in spayed and neutered dogs and cats. Neutering male dogs and cats can reduce urine marking in your house, aggression towards other dogs, and territorial aggression. It is important to realize that these behaviors can become a habit and continue after neutering.

Many experts say that once a pet is older than 1 year of age and still intact, undesirable behaviors are more likely to become permanent even if they are neutered at that time. The most dangerous behavior seen in intact males is roaming, i.e., running away to look for a mate, because it leads to animals running away as well as car accidents. Intact male can detect females in heat from miles away so it is not safe to leave them outside unsupervised. The medical benefits resulting from spaying and neutering pets lead to longer and healthier lives. They are outpatient procedures and animals can go home the day of the surgery.