

Should I have my cat castrated / spayed?

Neutering your pet is important for a number of very good reasons. It will prevent unwanted litters of kittens, as well as reducing the incidence of antisocial behaviour and quite a number of common diseases and infections. This fact sheet aims to outline some of the reasons why we neuter cats. Please feel free to discuss your options with the vet or nurse if you are unsure whether to have your pet neutered.

Tom Cats.

Tom Cats can be castrated from 6 months of age onwards. Neutering should effectively control antisocial behaviour such as urine spraying, and reduce roaming and fighting. This in turn reduces the chances of road accidents and your cat is less likely to get abscesses from bite wounds or to pick up infectious diseases such as FIV (feline immunodeficiency virus) and FeLV (feline leukaemia virus) from other cats. Castration involves removing both testicles completely. We recommend that all tomcats that go outside (and nearly all that stay indoors!) be neutered.

Monorchids/Cryptorchids. In some cats one or both testicles fail to descend properly into the scrotum at birth. This is thought to be largely a hereditary condition, and therefore affected animals should not be bred from (and cannot be shown). Retained testicles have a high risk of becoming cancerous and we therefore recommend that all monorchid and cryptorchid animals should be castrated.

Queens (female cats).

Queens can be spayed from 6 months of age onwards. They start coming into season at 6-8 months although this can be earlier in Spring/Autumn (sometimes as early as 4 months). They are in season for a few days every 3 weeks. When a cat is in season she starts "calling". She may roll around and adopt strange postures, become very affectionate or sometimes aggressive, and make unusual noises. If a cat starts calling she should preferably be spayed midway between seasons.

Spaying involves the removal of both ovaries and the uterus. We recommend that all female cats that go outside be spayed.

Shouldn't I let my cat have 1 litter? In short, no. Neutered cats do not miss the act of mating or rearing kittens. Unfortunately there are more kittens born each year in Britain than there are good homes for them. Each year rescue organisations take in many kittens bought on impulse then given up or abandoned, often in very poor condition. Many others do not reach safety and die miserably of starvation, disease or misadventure. It is also costly to let your cat have kittens. The mother cat needs much more food during pregnancy, and occasionally may require a caesarean section which can be very expensive, especially if outside normal opening hours. Pet insurance will not cover problems resulting from pregnancy. Kittens are susceptible to cat flu, upset stomachs and many other conditions needing vet treatment. They will need routine care such as worming and flea treatment. The mother can quickly get pregnant again after giving birth, and her kittens can get pregnant themselves from 5 months of age. Continually having kittens also puts the mother's health at risk.

Neutering of any animal may slightly reduce its metabolic rate and therefore reduce its food requirement to maintain a normal body weight. Careful attention to diet will prevent excessive weight gain and is important to your pet's health. We are happy to advise on the optimum diet for your pet. Please feel free to ask a vet or veterinary nurse about your pet's diet. We also hold free "Nurse Clinics" on most afternoons where your pet's weight can be monitored and diets can be discussed with our nurses who are qualified nutritional advisors.

What is involved?

When you book your pet in for his/her operation with the receptionist, you will usually be asked to come in for a **pre-op check**, so that a vet can examine your pet and find out if

he/she is ready to be castrated / spayed. Once the vet is happy that your pet is healthy, you can book in for the operation. You will be asked **not to feed** him/her after 9pm the night before the operation, and to remove the water bowl first thing in the morning. This is important as a full stomach increases the risk of your pet being sick when coming round from the anaesthetic, which can be dangerous. You will be asked to bring your pet to the surgery between **8am and 8.30am** (between 8.30 and 9am at Feltham and Addlestone surgeries) on the morning of the operation. You will be asked to read and **sign a consent form**. Please read this carefully and ask about anything you are not sure about.

In order to minimise the risks and complications of a general anaesthetic, we perform a full physical examination of your pet. However we highly recommend a **pre anaesthetic blood test**, at an additional fee, to identify any pre-existing problems that may not be evident physically but may potentially lead to complications. Although all pets could benefit from this test, we would especially recommend it for those pets over 8 years of age, or who seem to have an increased thirst. The test checks for kidney function, liver damage and glucose levels and so helps us to ensure that your pet's organs are healthy and there are no hidden problems that could put your pet at risk. If the results are within the normal range we can proceed with confidence, knowing the anaesthetic risk is minimised. If results are not within the normal ranges, we can alter the anaesthetic procedure, reduce drug dosages, use intravenous fluids and take other precautions to safeguard your pet's health and reduce the risk of complications. We will contact you if the pre operative blood results are abnormal.

A veterinary nurse will admit your pet provided that a pre op check has taken place. If your pet has shown any signs of being unwell in the recent past or has any allergies to medication, then please bring this to his/her attention. A nurse will then take your pet through to the hospital area where he/she will be **weighed** and given a pre-med injection. This reduces any anxiety and allows a smoother transition into and out of anaesthesia, as well as providing postoperative pain

relief. Your pet is then bedded down in our kennels until he/she is ready for the operation. A short acting **anaesthetic** is administered by injection into a vein in the leg, which causes the animal to fall asleep within a few seconds. For female cats a tube is then placed into the animal's airway and connected to an anaesthetic machine that keeps him/her asleep on a gaseous anaesthetic for the duration of the operation. For male cats, oxygen and gaseous anaesthetic is administered through a mask (as castration is a much shorter procedure). A nurse monitors the anaesthetic throughout the operation, and once the operation is over your pet is kept on oxygen until he/she starts to wake up, which takes only a few minutes. Your pet will be given a **pain relieving injection** and returned to kennels where he/she is given a comfy bed and is monitored until fully conscious.

Patients in for routine operations are usually allowed home the same day, but occasionally they will need to stay overnight if they are still sleepy from the anaesthetic. Your pet may be sent home with an Elizabethan collar to prevent them from interfering with the wound. We ask owners to bring their pets in for a **post op check** with the nurse **2-3 days** following surgery, and a second check up at **10-14 days** to check the wound and remove any non-dissolvable stitches. There are no extra charges for these check-ups.