



It is a sad truth that the number of kittens born every year is far greater than the number of good homes that can be found for them. As a result, thousands of healthy animals are destroyed and many more unwanted cats are left to fend for themselves. Having your cat neutered will not only help to reduce these numbers, it is also one of the simplest, safest and most practical ways of safeguarding your cat's health and welfare.

What does neutering involve?

Both castration in the male cat and spaying in the female are major operations which need a general anaesthetic. Your cat must be fasted overnight before the operation to reduce the risk of problems on the operating table. Castrating male cats is a relatively straightforward operation and there is very little chance of anything going wrong. Spaying females is more difficult but it is one of the operations most frequently carried out by vets and any experienced vet will have done it many hundreds of times.

Both castration and spaying involve a single cut, into the belly of the female, to remove the ovaries and uterus (womb), or into the scrotum of the male dog to take out the testicles. Your cat should be ready to come home on the same day as surgery, as soon as the anaesthetic has worn off. If there are any complications, your vet might want to keep your cat in hospital overnight to keep an eye on them.

What are the benefits of neutering?

- **Females** - spaying will stop the bleeding that occurs with every heat cycle and prevent any changes in your female's behaviour. Females that are not spayed, but who do not have litters, may develop false pregnancy or infection in the womb. Early spaying of females reduces the risk of them developing mammary cancer (breast cancer) later in life.
- **Males** - some males develop antisocial behaviour when they reach maturity. This may be in the form of aggressive or sexual behaviour - mounting other animals or people! Uncastrated males, if left to their own devices, may patrol a wide area in search of a mate and can detect a female on heat over long distances. A male that wanders is more likely to be involved in a car accident. Castrating males also reduces the risk of them developing diseases of the prostate in later life.

When should my cat be neutered?

Traditionally, female and male cats have usually been neutered at about six months old. Before the development of safe anaesthetics and surgical methods it was believed that a nearly fully grown animal would cope better with the operation. However, increasing numbers of vets now like to neuter animals much earlier, from about eight weeks. There is no evidence that such early neutering harms a cat's later health and physical development. Your vet will be happy to discuss with you the best time for neutering your cat.

Is it ever too late for neutering?

There is no upper age limit for neutering your cat. You may wish to have your cat neutered if you acquire it as an adult or you may want to have a litter or two before your cat is retired as a breeding animal. Tomcats can also be neutered later in life and this may reduce certain types of antisocial behaviour such as spraying. But the older the male is, the more likely that it will carry on showing the less desirable behaviour traits such as aggression or mounting. If older males develop prostate problems, castration may be recommended as the treatment.

Is neutering dangerous?

All operations requiring a general anaesthetic involve a certain amount of risk and on rare occasions there may be complications after the operation. If you are concerned about your cat after the operation, contact your vet immediately.

Will neutering make my cat fat and lazy?

Neutering will not have any significant effect on your cat's lifestyle apart from eliminating its sexual behaviour. Most owners find that any changes in their cat's personality are for the better as many neutered cats become more affectionate and playful.



Should a cat have one litter of kittens?

It is a myth that a cat needs to have a litter of kittens. What your cat doesn't know it won't miss and neutering will save you the trouble and anxiety of finding good homes for the kittens.

Is neutering expensive?

Different vets will charge different prices for neutering, costs may vary according to the location of the practice and the quality of the facilities there. If you are concerned about the cost of neutering talk to your vet. On the whole all vets want to see as few unwanted kittens as possible and will try to minimise their charges. People on low or fixed incomes may be able to get help with the costs of the procedure from one of the animal shelters. A pregnant female will need more food to support herself and her offspring, the litter will need veterinary attention and you may have to advertise to find them good homes.

If you want any other information on health issues concerning your cat please contact Unicorn Vets on 023 8034 3434 and we will be happy to advise you.