

Spaying and Neutering - How it benefits your pet

The County of Lake and both the cities of Lakeport and Clearlake require that all cats and dogs be spayed or neutered. An unspayed female and her offspring can produce over 10,000 animals within seven years. An unneutered male can father thousands more.

What is spaying or neutering? The term neutering is correct for either a male or female animal but usually used when referring to a male. Neutering is the removal of the testicles. The animal is given anesthesia, shaved and prepped for surgery, a small incision is made and the testicles are removed. Spaying, a term only applicable to female animals, is an ovariohysterectomy. Like the males, they are anesthetized, shaved and prepped for surgery, an incision is made and both uterus and ovaries are removed. Most pets recover in 7-10 days after the surgery and must refrain from vigorous exercise, swimming and bathing during their recovery.

Once a human being takes on the responsibility of a pet, they are in control of the animal's food, safety and health issues and this includes being responsible for your pet's reproductive ability. An animal on the prowl for their perfect mate is subject to more fights, more chance of contracting diseases, and more chance of getting hit by a car.

For females, some people believe that their animal should go through a heat cycle or pregnancy before being spayed. This is not true. It's much safer for your pet in the long run to be spayed before her first heat cycle, which usually occurs between the ages of six and eight months, depending on the breed. Having her spayed at an early age, before hormones develop, reduces the risk of life-threatening health issues, such as mammary tumors or pyometra (infected/pus-filled uterus and uterine horns).

A male animal can safely be neutered as soon as both testicles have descended, which is around four and six months old.

Once your pet is spayed or neutered, it is important to know that their hormones will change. This can potentially slow their metabolism. It is important to monitor their weight and caloric intake. They do not gain weight because they are reproductively altered. They gain weight because they are eating too many calories. Monitor how much you are feeding your pet. If they are putting on more weight than they should, then cut back on the calories they are getting. And also make sure that your pet is getting exercise daily. Keeping them strong and trim will help them live longer and healthier lives.

For some, they believe that once they are spayed or neutered, their pet's personality is going to change. This may or may not occur. If it does occur, the difference in behavior is usually for the better. Male cats that are neutered early don't usually develop the habit of spraying to mark their territory. Male dogs are less likely to lift their legs to urinate on the furniture. Male dogs may also end up being

less aggressive but, can still can be protective of you and your family.

Spaying and neutering are routine and safe surgeries when performed in young and healthy animals. If they are not specific breeding dogs or cats, then it is in your pet's best health interests to have them spayed or neutered. And if they are going to be bred, make sure to have them spayed or neutered when they are finished breeding. If you have any questions or concerns, it is important to have this discussion further with your Veterinarian.