

CATS Q&A



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SPAY
AWARE

Why is it so important to spay or neuter my cat?

Because it is the most effective way to stop animal overpopulation, which each year results in thousands of unwanted cats being handed into shelters or just abandoned. Unlike dogs, no official figures are available for the number of abandoned cats, but based on anecdotal evidence, it is believed there are significantly more abandoned cats than dogs, as well as numerous felines living in feral cat colonies.

What are the health benefits of spaying or neutering my cat?

There is significant evidence that early spaying or neutering can have important benefits for the health of the individual animal. These include reducing the risk of certain cancers, having a positive benefit for health and lifespan, and curbing unwanted behaviour and marking.

What are the health benefits of spaying female cats?

Unspayed cats are seven times more likely to develop mammary cancer than those spayed at puberty. Mammary cancer is the third most common form of neoplasm (abnormal tissue growth), though with a lower risk than in female dogs. 80% of feline mammary tumours are malignant. Neutering female cats also prevents pyometra (infection of the uterus), which though not common in cats, is not unheard of. Prevention of unwanted pregnancy/litters, eliminates the risk of dystocia (birthing difficulties). Spaying also eliminates or reduces the occurrence of certain unwanted feline behaviours.

Isn't it good for a female cat to have at least one litter of kittens?

This was a widespread view in the past - one that was even shared by some vets - but this recommendation was based on opinion rather than hard fact. There is no evidence to suggest that allowing a cat to have a litter of kittens confers any health benefits. The best veterinary advice now is that in the vast majority of cases, spay/neuter is much the healthier option and should be the natural choice for owners.

What's wrong with allowing my cat to have kittens if I find homes for them?

Many people think they are not contributing to the pet over-population problem, but in fact, this is not the case. Although the kittens they produce may go to good homes, they are taking up places that would otherwise have been available for an abandoned cat that ends up in an animal shelter.

What are the health benefits of neutering male cats?

Neutering reduces fighting and unwanted territorial behaviour by over 80%, significantly reducing cat bite abscesses, as well as reducing the risk of FIV and Feline Leukaemia Viral Infection. Neutering also significantly reduces male urine marking behaviour.

When should I have my cat neutered or spayed?

The latest advice is that in most cases spaying and neutering should be carried out at an earlier age than was previously suggested. In general, both male and female cats should be neutered/spayed at four months of age. While this is earlier than previously recommended, it is now the expert international recommendation, so please seek advice from your vet.

I have decided to have my cat neutered/spayed. What's the next step?

The above answers are guidelines only. Your vet will assess your cat and help you to weigh up the benefits of spaying or neutering in relation to your pet's individual health and circumstances.