

SPAYING or NEUTERING *your cat*

Part of being conscientious cat owner is considering the importance of spaying or neutering your feline friend. Read on for more info and the truth behind some common myths.

Besides preventing unwanted litters, spaying or neutering your cat helps prevent many life-threatening diseases and can head off some irritating behaviors.

Spaying

Although it's commonly referred to as a spay, this surgery is actually a complete ovariectomy, or the removal of both ovaries and the uterus. Spayed cats are at much lower risk for ovarian cancers and cysts, mammary gland tumors, and uterine infections.

Unspayed females are also more likely to exhibit inappropriate urine marking during their heat cycles—not to mention their aggravating wailing and crying to be let outside. The urge to reproduce is amazingly powerful in cats. Those of us who have endured the company of a cat in heat know all too well the origin of the term caterwauling!

Neutering

Neutering is the removal of both testicles. It sounds worse than it is—and no, he won't miss them! Neutered males are less susceptible to prostate disease and testicular cancer.

Castrated male cats are often more affectionate and people-oriented, and neutering your cat usually keeps

him from spraying his objectionably strong-smelling urine in your home to mark his territory. Neutered males are also less likely to wander from home, so neuter your pet before his heart leads him into the path of an oncoming car.

Common myths

Often people worry that their spayed or neutered pet will get fat. However, the aging process probably affects weight gain more than anything—as many of us are painfully aware from our human experience. It's true that lowered hormone levels may decrease your pet's activity. The key to this problem is simple—give your pet less food and more exercise.

It's also a myth that females need to complete a heat cycle before being spayed. There is no medical reason for this old wives' tale. In fact, the fewer heat cycles your pet goes through before getting spayed, the better her protection against mammary cancer. Because cats are very efficient breeders, all it would take is her getting out once while in heat—and you'd have kittens.

Worried your male cat will lose his personality after neutering? Relax! If he loses anything, it will be his sexual impulses and the associated marking behavior.

