



28966 Information Lane
Easton, Maryland 21601
(410) 822-8505 (410) 758-3404

NEUTERING

What is neutering?

Neutering is a surgical procedure that removes the ovaries and uterus (ovariohysterectomy) or the ovaries (ovariectomy) in the female (commonly known as spaying), and the testicles (castration) in the male. This permanent surgery sterilizes your pet so it cannot reproduce.

Why neuter my pet?

Sterilization of the female eliminates unwanted pregnancy, as well as eliminating heat cycles that occur on average every 6 months. It reduces the risk of mammary cancer that is linked to heat cycles, and it reduces the risk of pyometra (infected uterus).

In the male, it reduces unwanted male behavior, such as urine marking and aggression, as well as roaming. It eliminates the risk of testicular tumors, and also reduces the risk of prostatic infections. It does NOT reduce the risk of prostatic cancer.

When to neuter my pet?

There is no definitive “best” time to neuter your dog. Shelter animals are usually neutered before they are adopted, sometimes as early as 8 weeks of age. However, there is new evidence to support waiting much longer than that. Recent studies in Golden Retrievers, Vizslas, and Rottweilers have shown that early neutering of both males and females MAY increase the incidence of certain cancers and orthopedic problems in these breeds. It is unknown how this applies to smaller breeds. However, multiple heat cycles may increase the incidence of mammary cancer and pyometra in female dogs. Unneutered males also have a higher rate of prostatic infections and testicular cancer. Taking all these factors into account, it is now suggested that neutering at 2-3 years of age may be the best compromise. Of course, if you do not have a safe place to keep your female when she is in heat, the risk of accidental pregnancy and pet overpopulation far outweighs the risk of later cancers. If you have concerns about your pet, please discuss it with us!

In cats, there is no clear evidence at this time that early neutering is detrimental in any way. We still recommend surgical sterilization at 6 -7 months for both male and female cats.

Will my pet get fat?

Surgical sterilization does not cause your pet to get fat. Diet, exercise, and heredity have much more influence on the weight of your pet. However, because your neutered pet does not have the caloric needs of an unneutered pet, they should be fed less in order to maintain the same weight.



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Dental Disease in Cats

Cats have 30 teeth, all of which are sharp and pointy for shearing food; they have no flat surfaces for chewing. Cats also lack certain enzymes in the mouth to predigest carbohydrates. Cats are predisposed to gingival inflammation and subsequent periodontal disease. Periodontal disease is the loss of the supporting structures of the tooth or damage to the tooth itself.

Dental disease begins when a bacterial plaque biofilm is formed. Over time, this film mineralizes, and calcifies into tartar. The bacterial population accumulates, which leads to inflammation and results in periodontal disease. Certain viruses and genetics can further worsen oral health in cats. As a result, periodontal disease is the most prevalent problem *of any disease* in all cats three years of age and older! Detection of periodontal disease can be difficult as there can be oral abnormalities and pain with minimal visible change to the tooth above the gum.

In addition to periodontal disease, cats can also develop other serious dental diseases, including feline odontoclastic resorptive lesions (FORL), stomatitis (widespread inflammation of the mouth), and fractured teeth.

There are four stages of periodontal disease, with stage one being the most minimal and progressing through to stage four. Stages 1 and 2 are the only stages that considered reversible, through the use of professional and home dental healthcare. Professional dental evaluation should be performed every 6-12 months. This exam involves a general physical exam to look at the mouth and assess for pain. Anesthesia is required for a more in depth exam and oral radiographs. Dental procedures (such as teeth scaling and polishing, or surgical extractions of diseased teeth) are performed after the assessment.

What to Look for?

Signs of dental pathology can include bad breath, dropping food, chewing only on one side of the mouth, facial swellings or draining wounds, bleeding or discharge from the mouth or nose, sneezing, pawing at the mouth, tooth grinding, or discolored teeth. Often there are no obvious signs of dental disease. Most cats with dental disease still eat without a noticeable change in appetite!

Home Care

The gold standard for preventative dental homecare is tooth brushing. Adjuncts to this include dental diets, treats and toys, along with oral rinses, gels, sprays and water additive. The Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC) provides a list of the specific products which meet certain standards for the retardation of plaque and calculus, and can be found on their website (see below). Home care is not sufficient once dental disease has progressed past stages 1/2 -- only professional dental therapy can effectively treat the more severe stages of dental disease.

Online Resources

[American Veterinary Dental College](#)

The website for the American Veterinary Dental College includes information for pet owners on dental care, more in-depth information about various dental diseases in pets, and additionally, a list of board-certified veterinary dentists throughout the world.

[Cornell University - College of Veterinary Medicine](#)

This video series gives step-by-step instructions on how to brush your cat's teeth. The video series also includes a 4-week training program that you can follow to make it easier for you and your cat to prevent dental disease.

[The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals \(ASPCA\)](#)

This article outlines 10 steps to dental health as well as tips on how to monitor your cat's dental health at home. This allows you to understand and identify changes to determine whether it's time to see the vet for a more thorough assessment. Also included is helpful advice on how to brush your cat's "PURRR-ly whites."

[Veterinary Oral Healthcare Council \(VOHC\)](#)

The website for the Veterinary Oral Healthcare Council (VOHC) contains more information on products that are approved by the VOHC for retardation of certain dental diseases.



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Claw Trimming and Grooming

Claw Trimming

Trimming a cat's claws takes a little practice but is not difficult. Convincing your cat that nail trims are necessary might be the hardest part of the procedure! The procedure is best done on a regular basis so cats are acclimated to it. Choose a time when your cat is less active- morning and midday may be best. Have treats readily available for reward once the procedure is completed. Small human nail trimmers are often easier to use than the bulky dog nail trimmers. Trim the tips of the nail, staying away from the pink, sensitive tissue, otherwise known as the quick.

This site below offers excellent photographs that allow you to study the details of claw anatomy so that you will be confident when you practice on your own cat. This website also shows a few different claw-trimming tools and how to trim with your cat held in your lap.

http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/ClientED/cat_claws.aspx

Grooming

Regular brushing can help keep your cat's hair coat healthy. It is essential in longer hair cats and helps prevent the coat from matting. Once the coat is matted, the fur can pull on the skin and cause discomfort. Most cats are fastidious groomers and should not require regular bathing. If bathing your cat, avoid flea/tick products, as cats can be very sensitive to chemicals.