

## **The benefits of a spayed or neutered pet**

**Are you unsure whether to have your pet sterilized? Here is some information you should know:**

Spaying and neutering helps a pet live a longer, healthier life. It's true! Studies have shown that spayed or neutered pets are less likely to develop reproductive-related health problems. In fact, the earlier in life that a cat or dog is altered, the better.

Spayed and neutered pets have fewer behavioral issues. Neutered cats are less likely to spray; neutered dogs are less likely to wander or escape the yard. Both are less prone to fighting. Spayed females don't go into heat, so you don't have to deal with the discharge or the boisterous, noisy male suitors. Without the urge to mate, your cat or dog is more likely to focus on you, resulting in a closer bond.

Another benefit is that many animal control agencies offer reduced licensing fees for sterilized pets. Spaying or neutering your pet means that your animal and its potential offspring won't contribute to the population of unwanted pets. Many people are surprised to learn that annually more than 6 million animals enter shelters; more than 3 million are euthanized. You might think that these are animals born in the streets or that there is something wrong with them. But more often they are the offspring of cherished family pets.

The result is homeless animals that may have to be euthanized because there are more cats and dogs entering shelters than there are people willing to provide them with loving homes. Even if homes are found for your pet's kittens or puppies, it means there are fewer homes available for the pets already in shelters. Spay/neuter is the only permanent, 100-percent effective method of birth control for cats and dogs.

Good News! Spaying or neutering your pet is affordable. Some veterinarians offer reduced fees, some animal shelters hold onsite spay/neuter clinics that provide highly subsidized surgeries for pet owners who cannot afford or do not have access to regular veterinary services.

### **Questions and Answers**

**Q: Isn't it dangerous for my pet to undergo spay or neuter surgery?**

A: No. Thousands of cats and dogs are routinely and safely spayed or neutered every day by veterinarians all across the country. Although there is an inherent risk with anesthesia, monitoring equipment and the highest standards of care ensure this risk is minimal.

**Q: If I have my pet sterilized, won't he or she become fat and lazy?**

A: Pets that have been spayed or neutered can be just as active as unsterilized pets. Remember that any pet can gain weight if not provided with appropriate nutrition and adequate exercise.

**Q: Isn't it healthier for female cats and dogs to be bred once?**

A: No. Female cats and dogs are less likely to develop medical complications in their senior years if they have never been bred or experienced any estrus cycles.

**Q: Won't my pet's personality change if I have him neutered?**

A: Male cats will be calmer and more affectionate; male dogs will exhibit fewer aggressive tendencies, but their basic personalities won't change after sterilization.

**Q: Wouldn't it be great for my kids to witness the miracle of birth by letting our pet have a litter?**

A: The birth of a litter of kittens, puppies or other small pets is truly miraculous. However, it is equally important to teach children about being responsible for these new lives. Since the litter will add to the pet overpopulation problem, and there is no guarantee that they or any of their future litters will have good, lifelong homes, what other lesson will your children be learning from this experience? The real

miracle is life, and homeless pets that already exist need everyone's help. We all need to teach children to have compassion, respect and responsibility for the animals that share our world.