

Misconceptions about Spaying/Neutering Cats

Misconception: It is healthy for a female cat to have a litter of kittens before she is spayed.

Truth: There is no medically proven benefit to allowing females to have a litter of kittens. In fact, female cats who are spayed before their first heat are usually healthier and have a reduced risk of breast cancer.

Misconception: Kittens cannot get pregnant prior to six months of age.

Truth: Kittens can become pregnant as early as four months of age and give birth to their first litter when they are only six months old. Endorsed by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), many veterinarians are opting to spay and neuter cats as early as 2 months old. These young animals recover from surgery more quickly than do older ones, they experience less blood loss, and far fewer post-operative complications than do adult cats.

Misconception: It is not my responsibility to spay and neuter feral cats because they are not mine.

Truth: We all have a shared moral responsibility to care for the animals who we have domesticated. Although you may not own the cats yourself, you can help these cats AND your community greatly through TNR. If cats are not TNR'd in an area, their numbers will likely expand. Unaltered cats can spread diseases such as FIV and can give birth to sick kittens who will die at a young age. Unwanted kittens also place an unnecessary burden on local shelters.

Misconception: Spaying and neutering feral cats is cruel; they would be better off euthanized.

Truth: After feral cats are TNR'd they can live long, happy lives. Feral cats brought into TNR clinics are generally healthy; less than one percent require euthanasia for disease, trauma, or other incurable conditions. Veterinarians involved in TNR find less than 10% of the cats have a medical condition upon intake. Our 2015 feral cat survey found that 42% of colonies had cats who were 9-12 years old and 29% had cats who were 6-8 years old.

Misconception: Spaying and neutering is unnatural.

Truth: Spaying and neutering a cat is a routine veterinary procedure. Although it may sound unnatural or even cruel to some people, spaying and neutering reduces the risk of many health and behavioral problems. Spay/neuter surgery can prevent cancers, uterine infections, and breast tumors. Pyometra (an accumulation of pus in the uterus) is also a huge problem in unspayed females that is often fatal. Therefore, this sterilization is in the best interest of the animal. Many cats quickly recover from the surgery and do not suffer any adverse effects.

Misconception: Spaying and neutering is too expensive.

Truth: Many animal welfare groups offer discounted spay/neuter procedures. You can search Alley Cat Rescue's low-cost spay/neuter directory [here](#). Contact your local county-run shelter for reduced spay/neuter services.

Misconception: Indoor cats do not have to be spayed/neutered.

Truth: Even if your cat lives indoors, spaying or neutering is still recommended. Spay/neuter surgery reduces many problematic behaviors such as aggression, yowling, and spraying. Furthermore, if your cat escapes and gets outside, the cat could become pregnant or get another cat pregnant; this contributes to the problem of cat overpopulation. Indoor cats who are not sterilized, also tend to try to escape more due to their instinctual mating drive.

Misconception: My cat will get fat.

Truth: It is important to make sure your cat stays at a healthy weight, but failing to spay/neuter your cat will not guarantee they will remain thin. Cats often become overweight because of a lack of exercise, poor diet, or an underlying medical condition. If you are worried about your cat's weight, make sure to talk with your vet about ways you can help your cat maintain a healthy figure.

References

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