Types of Spay and Neuter Procedures

Spay/Neuter is a vital component of preventing cat overpopulation. Veterinarians and animal welfare groups widely recognize the importance of this medical procedure. Although most Americans are familiar with the traditional surgical spay/neuter procedures, there are different methods to sterilize a cat. Some of these approaches, such as through oral medication, need to be studied further before Alley Cat Rescue would recommend their use as a typical spay/neuter protocol. Chemical sterilants can have a place in controlling cat colonies in the U.S., but again at this time, they cannot adequately replace surgical sterilization and more research is required.

Neuter procedures for male cats:

- *Traditional neuter (orchiectomy):* removing the testes
  - **Advantages:** decreases problem behaviors such as aggression, spraying, and yowling
  - **Disadvantages:** surgery is needed, procedure can be longer than other options
- *Vasectomy:* veterinarian makes an incision in the scrotum, blocks off tubes
  - **Advantages:** surgery is usually quicker, faster recovery period
  - **Disadvantages:** male cat still produces high levels of testosterone which will not prevent problem behaviors
- *Injectable sterilant:* a chemical compound is injected into a male cat’s testicles causing sterility
  - **Advantages:** does not require anesthesia or surgery, procedure is fast
  - **Disadvantages:** potential adverse side effects such as swelling, used abroad but not approved for use in the U.S.

Spay procedures for female cats:

- *Traditional spay (ovariohysterectomy):* removing the ovaries, fallopian tubes, and uterus
  - **Advantages:** reduces problem behaviors, chances of complications are low, prevents all potential diseases to the ovaries and uterus
  - **Disadvantages:** requires surgery, greater risk of bleeding when the uterus is removed
- *Tubal Ligation:* blocking the fallopian tubes to prevent sperm from reaching the egg; the uterus and ovaries stay in tacked.
  - **Advantages:** less invasive
  - **Disadvantages:** increased risk of disease, pyometra, and infections, does not reduce problem behaviors
- *Left lateral flank spay:* surgery that uses a side incision rather than a midline incision, predominantly used in England
  - **Advantages:** less of a chance for infection, decreased risk of evisceration, easier to monitor recovery of incision on feral cats
  - **Disadvantages:** spay scar will be covered with fur once healed, making it difficult to know if the cat has been spayed, some studies show this surgery causes more discomfort in cat
- **Progestins**: hormone that can be given as an injection or oral medication
  - **Advantages**: less stressful for feral cats (medication can be placed in their food)
  - **Disadvantages**: cats need multiple courses of medication or injections, caregivers might not know if all the cats consumed the medication; adverse side effects including mammary and cystic tumors, pyometra

**Both spay and neuter procedure:**

- **Immuncontraceptives**: contraceptive vaccine that targets hormones
  - **Advantages**: no surgery is required, can activate the cat’s immune system to fight infections, diseases and cancers
  - **Disadvantages**: not approved for use in cats in the U.S., booster vaccines required every two years

**References**


