



molly's place rescue



## early-age spay/neuter

Each day 70,000 puppies and kittens are born in the United States. As long as these birth rates exist, there will never be enough homes for all the animals. Early spay/neuter is one of the easiest, most obvious solutions to the problem. We cannot kill or adopt our way out of pet overpopulation crisis. Spay and neuter is the only way.

For many years, animal shelters and humane organizations have had policies requiring new pet owners to have the animal neutered 'as soon as possible', but realistically, there has never been a way to enforce this requirement, and too many animals have left the shelter unsterilized, only to end up contributing to our already overwhelming pet overpopulation problem, despite the shelters' good intentions. Statistics report that more than half of the coupons given for low cost spay/neuter are never used.

All animals available for adoption through Molly's Place are spay/neutered before adoption, including puppies and kittens. We have researched juvenile spay/neuter and alter even young puppies and kittens. We have had NO issues with altering HEALTHY animals as young as seven weeks. In fact we have found their recovery time is much quicker and quite often they are up and about within a few hours.

Pediatric spay/neuter is the best way to stem the staggering pet overpopulation and allows us to combat the single largest cause of death in companion animals: homelessness due to overpopulation. In over 100 years of adopting animals in the United States, the overpopulation problem continues to increase. A "spay/neuter before adoption" policy is a solution that is practical, effective, and healthy.

Early spay/neuter is surrounded by a number of myths and misinformation. We wish to inform you of the facts so you may share them and spread the word about this essential procedure.

**When is the right time to spay or neuter puppies and kittens?** Timing is everything when it comes to spay and neuter. Most people who care about animals today want to spay or neuter the pets they bring into their home.

That's why every organization or person that places animals in new homes must have them spayed or neutered before adoption. It's a policy that we never waiver from here at Molly's Place. And it is something that cannot be left to the new pet owner, no matter what promises they make.

If animals are routinely spayed or neutered before placement, there's no risk factor that they'll create more puppies and kittens to add to the throng of unwanted offspring that already exists.

**When should an animal be spayed or neutered?** If the animal is available for adoption, the pet should be fixed before the new owner receives the pet, regardless of the animal's age. (Clearly animals that are too young to be spayed or neutered are too young to be adopted.)

From the standpoint of effectively controlling pet populations, the best time for sterilizing dogs and cats - the optimum time - is prior to puberty, eliminating any possibility of the animal producing offspring. It's important to remember that the single largest cause of death in companion animals is homelessness due to overpopulation.

### **How young can an animal be when fixed?**

Puppies and kittens can be spayed very early— as young as four weeks. The goal at Molly's Place is to get them fixed and ready to go at seven to eight weeks.

We routinely spay/neuter at seven to eight weeks. These surgeries are called juvenile spay/neuter or early spay/neuter. The procedure is quick and easy and works great.

Remember that kitties and puppies can go into heat and get pregnant as early as five months of age, which is a bit like babies having babies. So, a little procrastination by the new owner can result in undoing all the good that's been done by adopting the animal in the first place.

**Does early spay/neuter affect the look or health of the pet?** Years of careful observation have shown that pets that were fixed very young have lives that are as long and healthy as any other.

Two considerations that have been studied closely are the way that bones grow and the differences in body mass of those animals that were fixed early on. There is very little difference between early altering and later altering in these pets. Originally, there was some concern about male cats experiencing potential urinary blockages.

Now we know that male cats have the same chances of urinary blockage with or without early fixing.

### **Is early spay/neuter risky or dangerous?**

Any surgery has inherent risks. We try to reduce risks to as close to zero as possible by knowing our procedure and diligently watching our patients.

Young animals heal fast and are lower surgical risks than older animals who may be obese, in heat, pregnant, or ill. Moreover, young animals are more predictable and wake up faster after anesthesia.

### **The risk of surgical complications is much lower for kittens and puppies than for mature pets:**

- The reproductive organs of juvenile cats and dogs are much less vascular than those of adult animals, which allows for an easier, faster surgical procedure and reduces the risk of excessive bleeding during and after surgery.
- Faster surgery equates to less time under anesthesia, thus reducing the anesthetic risks.
- Anesthetic risks are further reduced because juvenile animals metabolize anesthesia more rapidly and recover from its effects more quickly than adult animals.
- The tissues of juvenile animals are more resilient, resulting in faster healing and less post-operative pain and stress.

Today, virtually every major veterinary and animal welfare organization endorses juvenile spay/neuter. Spay/neuter of shelter animals prior to adoption is now required by law in 28 states, thus mandating juvenile spay/neuter of puppies and kittens by all shelters and rescue groups in those states.

The proliferation of spay/neuter has been the single most important contributor in decreasing pet overpopulation during the past 40 years. Since 1970, the number of animals euthanized

in shelters each year has decreased from approximately 24 million to about 3.7 million — a number that is still unacceptable, but a vast improvement nonetheless.

### **Arguments for early-age spay/neuter procedures**

- Overpopulation and the resulting neglect, suffering, euthanasia -- early-age spay/neuter completely eliminates the possibility of unwanted litters.
- It avoids heat cycles completely: unwelcome 'visitors' fighting on the lawn, females howling and yowling!
- Neutered males are less likely to roam and fight, thus preventing injuries, spread of disease, and costly veterinary expenses. It has been estimated that 80% of dogs killed by cars and 80% of Feline AIDS cases are unneutered males.
- Overpopulation and the resulting neglect, suffering, euthanasia -- early-age spay/neuter completely eliminates the possibility of unwanted litters.
- Better-behaved pets -- neutered pets rarely spray mark, roam and fight. 85% of bites involve unneutered dogs.
- Healthier pets -- neutered males don't have the testicular cancer or prostate problems common in intact dogs. Females spayed before their first heat cycle have 96% less breast cancer. Their risk of uterine infection is dramatically decreased, not to mention the many complications associated with pregnancy, whelping or raising a litter.
- Reduces aggression and behavioral problems -- There are no health benefits in allowing a male to reach sexual maturity before neutering. And waiting can result in undesirable behaviors that can sometime be irreversible. Sexually mature male dogs and cats typically urine mark their

territory. Once this behavior becomes routine for the animal, it can sometimes be impossible to break, even if the animal is then neutered. The same is true of aggressive behaviors in sexually mature males. It is much better to prevent these behaviors from developing by neutering your dog or cat at a young age.

- It's safe -- the mortality rate is lower than that of the standard 6-9 month sterilization procedure.
- It's less traumatic for the pet -- young animals heal faster and are lower surgical risks than older animals who may be obese, in heat, pregnant, or ill. Young animals generally wake up faster after anesthesia.

There are risks associated with spaying and neutering animals of any age, but these risks are very minimal. The health benefits far outweigh the risks, and juvenile animals have a much lower risk of surgical complications than mature animals.

It is extremely important for veterinarians and pet owners alike to learn the facts about juvenile spay/neuter and understand the potential benefits for individual pets, as well as the greater impact on shelters and pet overpopulation.

**If you have animals that are not spayed or neutered, please take advantage of one of the following programs. In addition to preventing unwanted litters, spaying and neutering helps your pets live a happier, healthier life.**

- **It reduces or eliminates the risks of certain types of cancers and diseases**
- **It reduces roaming and aggression**
- **It reduces the likelihood of spraying or urinating in your home**
- **It is the only way to be absolutely sure that you and your pet will not be contributing to the problem of overpopulation**