

What if I want my children to experience the miracle of birth?

Public television and libraries are two excellent sources available to teach children about reproduction of animals. For millions of dogs, however, the “miracle of birth” is closely followed by euthanization – there are simply too many dogs being born. You should consider if you are prepared for the harsh realities of birthing pups. Are you prepared to cull (euthanize defective pups)? Do you want to explain to your children why a cesarean is necessary or why a mother abandons a pup? Is it worth getting your children up at two in the morning to experience this?

But I want to breed my purebred pet to make money.

Professional breeding of purebred animals is a science involving years of study of desirable breed characteristics. It would be difficult for a novice or amateur breeder to make proper breeding choices. If you are thinking of breeding your registered dog, remember that registration papers are not always evidence of quality. Even though there may be some champions within your dog’s pedigree, the majority of dogs sold to the public (even from professionals) are pet quality and should not be used for breeding.

For the novice, little money, if any, can be made while still properly caring for the mother and pups. The mother will have special and expensive needs and then there will be many puppies to be fed, wormed, vaccinated, advertised, and sold.

Is my pet too old for spaying/neutering?

Older dogs are safely spayed and neutered every day. Unless your dog has specific health problems, the surgery is safe and routine. The veterinarian will examine your dog before the operation to determine if any health problems are present. Owners of mature dogs enjoy spay/neuter benefits, too!!

Many thanks to Hilary Hines and Jen Condon for permission to reprint this article. Not to be copied without permission of the author.

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Frequently Asked Questions About Spaying And Neutering

Spaying and Neutering dogs is becoming a standard practice among today’s pet owners because of the many benefits that the procedure has to offer. In this pamphlet, we will attempt to answer the most common questions asked about the procedure. If you have other questions, please ask your veterinarian.

What is the pet overpopulation problem? Simply put, there are more puppies being born than there are homes in which to place them. Every year, over four million dogs in the United States are euthanized (killed) because they are unwanted. The vast majority of dogs being destroyed are not old, injured, sick, or antisocial. They are young, healthy, friendly, and playful. Many are purebred dogs. In fact, an estimated 1/4 of all dogs in shelters are purebreds.

Millions more dogs suffer and die each year. They face abandonment, neglect, abuse, starvation, and cruelty only because they are unwanted. You can help control the pet overpopulation problem by spaying or neutering your dog.

What are spaying and neutering? Spaying (for females) or neutering (for males) takes away an animal's ability to reproduce. Spaying involves surgical removal of the uterus and ovaries-- the equivalent of an ovarian hysterectomy in women. Neutering involves surgical removal of the testicles. Both operations--done under general anesthesia--are safe, routine, and relatively painless. Normally, a spayed or neutered dog is up and about within a day of the operation. Dogs have a higher pain tolerance than humans and generally do not need any pain medications after the surgery.

Is the surgery dangerous? Spaying and neutering are routine operations. The dog will be sent home with stitches which may or may not be dissolvable. If the stitches are not dissolvable, you will need to schedule an additional appointment to have the stitches removed. You will be given special instructions for post-surgery care which will likely include limited food and water intake and restricted activity for a prescribed amount of time.

How much time does it take to have a dog spayed/neutered? Most clinics and veterinary hospitals will accept your dog during morning hours, and the dog is usually available for pickup later that day or early the next day. Once again, remember that finding the time for one surgical visit will be much easier than finding time for the many repeated veterinary visits to treat sick or injured unaltered dogs, or than taking the time to provide care and find homes for puppies.

What are the benefits of spaying and neutering?

- Spayed and neutered dogs are less distracted by sexual instincts.
- Once spayed or neutered, dogs often form closer bonds with family members. Spayed and neutered dogs are less likely to roam the streets and become lost or injured in search of a mate. Male dogs can smell a female in heat and will travel great distances to reach her. Un-neutered males will be much more likely to be hit by a car while roaming or seized by animal control and face a death sentence.
- Spaying or neutering, contrary to popular belief, does not make a dog fat or lazy. Rather, the metabolism of a dog changes after the surgery and some dogs even require less food. This can save on dog food bills.
- Spayed and neutered dogs can be cheaper to license.

For those with female dogs:

- Spayed female dogs are less likely to develop cancer or pyometria, a common uterine infection in unaltered females.
- If spayed before her first heat, a female is 200 times less likely to develop breast cancer.
- Female dogs in heat can stain carpets and furniture.
- Females in heat attract noisy, fighting, and bothersome males.
- Pregnant female dogs eat more both when pregnant and after offspring are born. Health care for pregnant females is expensive.
- Raising puppies responsibly is expensive. It is time consuming to care for and place the puppies in good homes. Unwanted puppies end up adding to the pet overpopulation problem.

For those with male dogs:

- Neutered male dogs are less likely to suffer infections or disorders in the reproductive or prostate glands, or develop lower genito-urinary problems—which can lead to kidney disease, the most common problem in unaltered males over five years old.
- Unaltered male dogs typically spray urine to mark territory both inside and outside the home. Neutering at a young age can often help eliminate this problem. It is never too late, however, and neutering an older dog can often help curb this annoying habit.

Isn't spaying/neutering expensive? Most veterinarians try to keep charges for spaying and neutering affordable but prices can vary. We suggest that you call several veterinarians and spay/neuter clinics to check on costs for your dog. Call your local animal shelter to ask about low-cost clinics.

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Will spaying/neutering change my dog's personality? The majority of owners notice no change in their dog's personality. If a change is noticed, it is typically a decrease in their dog's desire to roam, fight, or exhibit anxious, aggressive behavior. Instead, they become more affectionate.

Will spaying/neutering affect an Australian Shepherd's desire to work? Australian Shepherds and other herding breeds will continue to work after spaying and neutering. Additionally, males will not be distracted from their work by females in heat. There are many spayed and neutered Aussies with working titles.

My dog never leaves my yard. Why should I spay/neuter my dog? As you have already read, there are many health benefits associated with spaying/neutering. And you can never be too careful: accidents do happen frequently to backyard dogs as interested suitors can usually find a way into the yard. Remember, spayed/neutered dogs can be calmer, easier to care for, and more attentive.

But, I know I can find a good home for each puppy in my dog's litter. Unfortunately, many dogs in animal shelters are brought in by owners who were unable to place them in homes. Often good homes find that they can no longer keep a puppy because they never checked with their landlord, they have to move, or they didn't research the breed. If you, as a breeder, can't take the puppy back it will possibly end up being neglected, abused or euthanized.