

Feline Neuter

By Jenna Lenarz DVM

Rippowam Animal Hospital

Neutering a male cat is an excellent step to help your young man grow into a loving, well adapted household citizen. The main reason to neuter a male cat is to reduce the incidence of objectionable behaviors that are normal in the feline world but unacceptable in the human world.

Roaming: More than 90% will reduce this behavior with neutering. Approximately 60% reduce this behavior right away

Fighting: More than 90% will reduce this behavior with neutering. Approximately 60% reduce this behavior right away

Urine marking: More than 90% will reduce this behavior with neutering. Approximately 80% reduce this behavior right away.

Another reason to neuter a male cat has to do with the physical appearance. Cats neutered prior to puberty (most cats are neutered at approximately age 6 months) do not develop secondary sex characteristics. These include a more muscular body, thickenings around the face called shields, and spines on the penis.

What is done exactly?

The feline neuter is one of the simplest surgical procedures performed in all of veterinary medicine. The cat is fasted overnight so that anesthesia is given on an empty stomach. The scrotum is opened with a small incision and the testicles are brought out. The cords are either pulled free and tied to each other or a small suture is used to tie the cords and the testicle is cut free. The skin incision on the scrotum is small enough so as not to require stitches of any kind.

Early Neuter?

A common animal shelter practice has been to adopt a young kitten with the new owner paying a neuter deposit to be refunded when the kitten is neutered at the traditional age of six months. The problem has been that new owners do not return and young cats go unneutered. Early neutering allows for kittens to be neutered prior to adoption. There has been some controversy over this practice as it flies in the face of tradition but all research to date has shown no negative consequences to early neutering.

Some **myths** have been:

Early neutering is more likely to prevent objectionable behaviors than when done at a later age.

This has not borne out. Neutering at any age is associated with the same statistics as listed above.

Kittens neutered early will be stunted or small.

This is not true, though early neutered kittens will not develop the more masculine appearance described above.

Early neutered kittens will have a narrowed urethra that will predispose them to blockage with feline lower urinary tract disease.

Early neutering does not seem to be a significant factor in this syndrome.

Some clinics support early neutering but prefer that kittens weigh at least 3 lbs so that the tissues are not too difficult to manipulate.

Recovery

There is minimal recovery with this procedure. There should be no bleeding or swelling.