

The Truth About Spay and Neuter Surgery for Dogs

Learn the facts behind what will probably be your dog's only major surgery.

Q. When should I spay or neuter my dog?

As early as possible! Although dogs have traditionally been altered at six months, many veterinarians now practice early-age or juvenile spay/neuter surgery, which they perform on dogs as young as six to eight weeks. Doctors who practice this technique report that the surgery is significantly easier and quicker to perform; owners who have had pediatric spay/neuter performed on their dogs report fewer medical problems than those who have older dogs altered; and spaying or neutering homeless animals before adopting them out remains the best way to prevent unwanted births.

Q. Isn't spaying and neutering expensive?

Although to some owners the cost of surgery may seem high initially, it's a real bargain when compared with the cost of raising a litter of puppies. Spaying and neutering also saves taxpayer dollars. A recent survey of 186 shelters revealed an average cost of \$176 to handle each homeless animal — a cost that ultimately comes out of all our pockets.

While prices for spay/neuter surgery vary considerably, many humane societies, welfare organizations, and municipal animal care and control departments will spay/neuter animals at a reduced fee for people who truly need them those struggling to make ends meet on a low income or Good Samaritans who are paying for someone else's animal(s).

Some owners consider spay or neuter surgery as vital to their dogs health and welfare as routine physical examinations, good nutrition, grooming, playtime and love. Take the time to educate yourself about this important decision regarding your dogs care.

*Wenstrup, John, and Alexis Dowidchuk, "Pet Overpopulation: Data and Measurement Issues in Shelters," Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science, 2(4), 1999, 303-319.

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