

The Medical Truth About Early Spay and Neuter in Cats and Dogs



Dr. James Krone

Early spay/neuter surgery performed on cats and dogs before the age of 16 weeks has been safely and effectively practiced in the United States for over 25 years.¹ The nation's most esteemed veterinary medical health professionals all advocate early spaying and neutering in cats and dogs to combat pet overpopulation. These animal health leaders include the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the California Veterinary Medical Association, the American Animal Hospital Association, the Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights, HSUS, ASPCA, UC Davis

Veterinary College and other respected veterinary colleges.

For over a decade the AVMA has advocated early spaying and neutering as a moral and professional imperative:

"Lowering the number of stray dogs and cats is a high priority for anyone who cares. The AVMA is on record as endorsing early age spay/neuter. As president of the AVMA, I feel it is unconscionable not to use early spay/neuter since it is safe and very, very effective in achieving our goals." Dr. Sherbyn Ostrich, President, AVMA, 1996.

Animal breeders and fanciers also endorse early spaying and neutering as a vital means to address the pet overpopulation crisis. The American Kennel Club, the world's largest registry of purebred dogs, whose mission is to "advance canine health and well-being" and "promote responsible pet ownership,"² is a very strong supporter of spaying and neutering, and advocates the importance of these surgeries on its website:



"The American Kennel Club encourages pet owners to spay or neuter their dogs as a responsible means to prevent an accidental breeding resulting in unwanted puppies."³

The Cat Fanciers' Association, the world's largest registry of pedigreed cats is also a strong advocate of early spaying and neutering to stem pet overpopulation and changed its decades-old show rules to permit spayed and neutered kittens to compete.⁴ The Cat Fanciers' Association's dedication to "enhancing the well-being of all cats" is evident in its published professional policy statements:

"As cat breeders, we must do our part to curtail the serious issue of surplus animals... [e]arly altering is a safe and effective means of ensuring we do not unwittingly add to the burden of unwanted pets."⁵

Not only is early spaying and neutering proven to be safe and effective, it provides numerous health benefits and protections for cats and dogs. For male animals this includes partial or complete protection from testicular cancer and tumors; prostate tumors and infections; and perineal and inguinal hernias and infections. In female animals it prevents breast cancer; mammary tumors; uterine infections; false pregnancies; mastitis; transmissible venereal sarcoma; ovarian cancer, cysts and infections; uterine tumors; and chronic endometritis. Spaying and neutering also prevents generational continuation of harmful congenital defects and genetic traits such as epilepsy and hip dysplasia.⁶ Most importantly, spaying and neutering prevents unplanned, unwanted litters of animals.

¹Bloomberg, Mark S. DVM, MS; W.P. Stubbs, W.P., DVM; Senior, D.F. BVSc; Lane, Thomas J., BS, DVM, Developmental and Behavioral Effects of Prepubertal Gonadectomy. University of Florida at Gainesville. (Feb. 1991; Updated Feb. 1992).

²The American Kennel Club Annual Report 2006, at p. 1.

³American Kennel Club: Veterinary Community Frequently Asked Questions, April 19, 2007.

⁴Cat Fanciers' Association, Early Spay/Neuter in the Cat: A Progress Report, April 19, 2007.

⁵Cat Fanciers' Association: Early Spay/Neuter in the Cat, April 19, 2007.

⁶See, Marrison, Ruth, DMV. New Views on Neutering, Purebred Dogs/American Kennel Gazette, (Apr. 1992) at pp 50-54; Prepubertal Gonadectomy Study; Howe, Boothe, Slater, Hobson, Fossum, Longterm Outcome of Gonadectomy Performed at an Early Age or Traditional Age in Cats, JAVMA Vol 217, No 11, (Dec 2000).