



# The Facts About Spaying and Neutering

Each day thousands of puppies and kittens are born in this country and many will end up in shelters. The good news is you can personally make a difference by spaying or neutering your dog.

Sadly, there are still many misconceptions about spaying and neutering. Once you know the facts, you'll agree—spaying and neutering just makes sense.

**MYTH:** Spaying or neutering is expensive.

**FACT:** Spay and neuter surgery carries a one-time cost that is relatively small when you consider the benefits. And remember this: the health care bills for an entire litter of puppies can add up quickly. In addition, spaying and neutering reduces or eliminates the possibility of cancers and other diseases of the reproductive system. Ask your veterinarian about financial assistance, payment plans, or the name of a reputable organization that may perform the surgery for a reduced fee or for free. Local humane societies will often have assistance available.

**MYTH:** It's a shame to alter a purebred dog.

**FACT:** Unless you plan to show your dog for conformation, spaying and neutering is highly recommended for his health and well-being. Spayed and neutered dogs are still eligible for obedience trials, field trials, hunting trials, and agility.

**MYTH:** It's healthier for a female dog to have a litter of puppies.

**FACT:** Actually, evidence shows that females spayed before their first heat cycle are typically healthier. If you spay a female when she's young, you decrease the chance of mammary cancers, and other illnesses.

**MYTH:** My dog will get fat and lazy.

**FACT:** Overeating and lack of exercise will cause your dog to become fat and lazy, not spaying and neutering. Some dogs do become more interested in food after being altered, so you may need to feed smaller portions.

**MYTH:** My dog's behavior will change after being altered.

**FACT:** You might be surprised to learn that spaying and neutering may improve your dog's temperament. Dogs that are spayed or neutered tend to focus more on their owners and less on their mating drives. Males become less aggressive, less territorial, and wander less from their owners.

Ask your vet if you have questions—he or she can fully explain spay and neuter procedures to you and recommend the best age to have this surgery. In most cases, it is considered safe to alter dogs as early as eight weeks of age. There is no age limit for healthy dogs to be spayed or neutered, and even older pets can benefit from the surgery.

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