

WHAT IS STERILISATION?

Physical sterilisation involves the surgical removal of part of the reproductive organs from an animal to make it unable to reproduce. The testicles are removed in the male and the ovaries and uterus in the female. A sterilised male animal is also said to be castrated or neutered and a sterilised female animal spayed. Sterilisation is done mostly in the pet dog, cat and rabbit.

Sterilisation is performed by a veterinarian with the animal under general anesthesia. Strict sterility is practised throughout the procedure.

Castration of the male cat takes a couple of minutes while a dog spay may take up to an hour. Spays take longer for larger and fatter animals, or if the animal is on heat or pregnant.



WHY SHOULD I GET MY PET STERILISED?

- 🐾 To prevent unwanted litters. Physical sterilisation is the single most effective and humane method to control the growth of an animal population. It can abolish culling of stray and unwanted animals.
- 🐾 Sterilisation makes a better pet. It modifies the behaviour and activity level of the pet, making it easier to manage. The sterilised male is less likely to roam, show aggression, urinate indiscriminately or mount people or objects. The sterilised female will not come on heat and attract males or soil the house.

- 🐾 Sterilisation makes a healthier pet. It markedly reduces the incidence of mammary cancers and prevents womb infections. Females do not experience the stress of heat or pregnancy. Males have less of an urge to roam and mate and are much less likely to get injured in fights.

WHEN SHOULD I GET MY PET STERILISED?

Most veterinarians recommend that the pet can ideally be sterilised once it is past 6 months of age, as it is believed that by then the pet is sufficiently mature and has attained close to its adult size.

Some veterinarians recommend getting the pet sterilised after it has had its first heat. There is no evidence that this is beneficial. On the other hand, it is generally accepted that sterilising a female animal before its first heat significantly reduces the risk of mammary cancer, more so than if it is sterilised after its first heat or subsequent heat periods, or if it is not sterilised at all.

Recently, some veterinarians have been sterilising stray cats at 4 months of age or younger. This is also being done at animal shelters overseas. The rationale for sterilising at this early age is that stray cats can already come on heat and get pregnant at that age. Animals at shelters are sterilised before they are put up for adoption in order to avoid the problem of owners not getting the animals sterilised.



IS STERILISATION SAFE? IS IT PAINFUL?

Sterilisation is very safe. Your pet will not experience any pain during the procedure as it will be sleeping under a general anaesthesia. During recovery the sedative and anaesthesia will continue to have effect for sometime so your pet will not feel much pain. Most pets will resume their normal activity within 48 hours of waking up from the surgery.



CAN IT CAUSE A CHANGE IN MY PET?

Yes, it can. However changes are minimal and minor. Sterilised animals are likely to become less active and more homely. This makes them easier to manage and train. Owners should reduce their pet's food intake to prevent it from putting on excessive weight. In very few cases sterilised animals may lose some control of their bladder or have symmetrical thinning of body hair when they are older. These are not serious conditions and can be easily treated with medication.

The benefits of sterilisation far outweigh the possible changes that may sometimes occur.

HAVE YOUR STERILISED PET TATTOOED

Most of the time one can tell whether a male animal has been sterilised but not so in a female animal. In the female if there is no visible residual scar left over from the surgery, the only way to be sure whether it has been sterilised is for the veterinarian to perform an exploratory surgery. Such a situation usually arises where a pet is rehomed and the new owner does not know its past history.

One way to avoid this happening to your pet in the future is to request your veterinarian to place a tattoo on one of its ear flaps at the time it is sterilised. The tattoo can serve as a permanent mark to identify your pet as sterilised. The tattoo can be in the form of a circle with a line across (as is used by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) or it can be an initial such as the letter S.



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