



SAN TAN CANINE TRAINING NEWSLETTER

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Spay and Neuter Myths

In the United States there are just not enough homes for the animals, and four to five million dogs and cats are euthanized every year.

Sterilizing dogs and cats has been hailed as the most effective method for pet population control. You can help save lives by spaying and neutering your pet. If pets can't breed, they don't produce puppies that end up in animal shelters to be adopted or euthanized. Currently, over 56% of dogs and approximately 75% of cats entering shelters are put to sleep.

The perpetuation of myths about spaying and neutering and the high cost cause many people to avoid the procedures, but the fact is sterilization makes your dog a better behaved, healthier pet and will save you money in the long run.

Many people, particularly men, have a hard time sterilizing their pets, imposing upon their dogs their own feelings on losing reproductive abilities. A dog will not feel like less of a "man" or "woman" after being sterilized. It will not suffer an identity crisis or mourn the loss of its reproductive capability. Your dog will simply have one less need to fulfill.

A dog's basic personality is formed more by environment and genetics than by sex hormones, so sterilization will not change your dog's basic personality, make your dog sluggish or affect its natural instinct to protect the pack. But it will give you a better behaved pet.

Neutered dogs have less desire to roam, mark territory (like your couch!) and exert dominance over the pack. Spayed dogs no longer experience the hormonal changes during heat cycles that turn your pet into a nervous dog that cries incessantly and attracts unwanted male dogs. Sterilized dogs are more affectionate and less likely to bite, run away, become aggressive, or get into a fight.

Another myth is that spaying and neutering cause weight gain. Dogs do not get fat simply by being sterilized. Just like humans, dogs gain weight if they eat too much and exercise too little or if they are overweight. The weight gain that people may witness after sterilization is most

likely caused by continuing to feed a high energy diet to a dog that is reducing its need for energy as it reaches adult size.

Dogs do not mourn their lost capability to reproduce. They reproduce solely to ensure the survival of their species. They do not raise a puppy for eighteen years. They do not dream of their puppy's wedding. They do not hope for the comfort of grandchildren in their old age. Female dogs nurse for a few weeks, teach the puppies rules, boundaries, and limitations and send them off to join the pack. Male dogs are not "fathers" in the human sense of the word; they do not even recognize puppies as their own.

As for expense, today there are enough low cost and free spay and neuter programs that this can no longer be an excuse! Even if these programs are not available in your area, the emotional distress and money spent on medical treatments you will save down the line makes it an investment that will be worth every penny.

Sterilization reduces the risk of incidence of a number of health problems that are difficult and expensive to treat. In females, it eliminates the possibility of developing uterine or ovarian cancer and greatly reduces the chance of breast cancer. Also, some females experience false pregnancies and uterine infections that can be fatal. Prostate cancer risk is greatly reduced in males. By sterilizing your pet, your dog will live a healthier and longer life.

Efforts by programs such as SPAY/USA already seem to be having an effect. In 1980, approximately 23.4 million animals were euthanized. Twenty-two years later, the estimate was down to 4.6 million. In towns and cities that have already implemented sterilization programs, the number of companion animals who had to be euthanized is showing a decline of 30 to 60 percent.

The truth is that neutered and spayed dogs are better pets. And though we're heading in the right direction, the problem of euthanasia continues. Be a part of the solution. Spay or neuter your pet today!

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