



NEUTERING MY CAT

Why should I neuter my cat?

Population control

To avoid adding to the number of unwanted cats and kittens looking for homes, it's important to neuter a female cat before she can have kittens. The first season is usually around six months of age but can be earlier, and queens can have up to three litters per year. For male cats, it only takes one male in an area to make a lot of cats pregnant! Unwanted kittens may not be cared for and can be at risk of infectious diseases such as cat flu. It's also important to remember that males and females from the same litter (siblings) can and will breed with each other once they reach sexual maturity. It is worth noting that due to the anatomy of a male cat's penis, mating is painful for female cats.

Protection from preventable diseases and health issues

Unneutered female cats can develop pyometra (infection of the uterus) and are more likely to suffer from mammary tumours (cancer) later in life. There's also a risk associated with pregnancy and birth, and queens (unneutered female cats) with infectious diseases may pass these on to their kittens. Unneutered male cats (toms) are likely to suffer from fight injuries, such as cat bite abscesses, and are more likely to spread diseases such as **FIV** (feline immunodeficiency virus) and **FelV** (feline leukaemia virus), both of which are transmitted through cat bites. Because they wander over a large area in search of a mate, they're also at greater risk of being hit by a car.

Control of unwanted behaviours

During sexually active times of the year (usually spring to autumn), a female cat will 'call' regularly – usually around every three weeks if she doesn't get pregnant. Unneutered male cats will roam across a large area away from home and may not return, marking their territory with a very pungent urine spray (sometimes, in the house!) and are much more likely to fight

What is neutering?

Neutering is the general term given to the surgical procedure to stop cats from reproducing. In female cats, it's called spaying, where the womb and ovaries are removed, and in male cats, it's called castration, where the testicles are removed.

Cats usually recover from the neutering operation quickly. You may notice your cat is a little drowsy when they first come home, but in most cases, they'll be back to their normal self by the following day. This is when it can be hard to keep them quiet. We recommend trying to reduce how much they can do to allow internal wounds time to heal. Your veterinary team will advise you on how long you should keep your cat quiet and reduce activity.

When should I neuter my cat?

Neutering should routinely take place at around four months of age, before cats reach sexual maturity.

What are the benefits of early neutering?

- It's less stressful for a young female cat to be spayed than to have a litter of kittens early in life
- It reduces the risk of certain cancers in female cats if they're neutered before six months of age
- Both male and female cats are less likely to pick up infectious diseases such as cat flu, FIV, and FeLV due to mating and fighting with other cats
- Male cats are less likely to be injured from fighting or roaming
- Younger cats are likely to recover more quickly and experience less pain after neutering in comparison to older cats: this is especially true in female cats as the surgery can be quicker with less abdominal fat.
- It can prevent sexual-related urine marking
- It plays an important role in cat population control – nearly 50% of cat litters in the UK in 2023 were unplanned
- It costs less to neuter your cat compared to the costs associated with caring for and feeding a litter of kittens
- It prevents the nuisance of excessive noise when a female cat comes into 'call' (which is very loud!)

If your cat is a very large breed, e.g. Maine Coon, you may want to discuss the timing of neutering with the vet.