

As Abraham Lincoln was quoted as saying ‘no matter how much cats fight, there always seem to be plenty of kittens’.

And at this time of year, with the days getting longer again, your female cat will come into season and attract the attention of tom cats for miles around. It will soon become pregnant unless you take steps to have it neutered.

Neutering is a surgical operation which stops female cats – queens – from becoming pregnant and male cats – toms – from making females pregnant.

It is generally recommended that kittens are neutered at around **four months of age or younger – although your cat can be neutered at any age**. Neutering is the best way to deal with the problems of unwanted pregnancies, by preventing the problem in the first place. Neutering also prevents some cancers and infections, reduces straying, fighting and spraying.

Leaving it until six months of age may be too late; your cat may already be pregnant.

#### **Why neuter?**

Neutering has many health benefits, as well as helping to reduce the number of unwanted cats in the UK.

#### **Neutered male cats:**

- are less likely to roam, reducing the risk of them suffering from car accidents
- are less likely to fight which reduces the risk of them getting injured or contracting serious diseases such as Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) or Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV)
- are less likely to spray
- are unable to develop tumours of the testicles
- make better pets and are more likely to be ‘homebodies’

#### **Neutered female cats:**

- won’t become pregnant, so there will be no expense associated with litters of kittens
- do not call or wail as unneutered queens do – so less disturbed sleep for the owner and neighbours!
- are less likely to contract diseases such as FIV and FeLV spread by bites and mating behaviour
- are unable to develop cancer of the ovaries or uterus. They are also at greatly reduced risk of developing mammary cancer – especially if neutered early

#### **The kittens born following an unplanned pregnancy:**

- may be at risk of disease
- cost a lot to look after and be provided with veterinary care – far more than is likely to be recouped from trying to sell them
- may find themselves homeless
- may deprive another unwanted cat or kitten from finding a new home as there are not enough homes to go round and they may have a difficult temperament.

So all in all it is much safer for your cat to be neutered and probably more economical for the owner too!

### **The operation**

Your cat will need to spend a day at the veterinary surgery and will be given a general anaesthetic, so no food should be offered in the hours prior to the operation. Your vet will advise you about when you should feed. The operation for both male and female cats is very simple and usually you will be able to drop your cat off and pick them back up on the same day.

Afterwards, a female cat will have a small shaved area on her side or belly – this hair will grow back in a few weeks. She will also have stitches which may need removing 10 days later.

Cats are very resilient and stoical – far more so than humans – and usually recover very quickly from the operation. Your vet will advise on the best care for your cat as he or she recovers.

Kittens seem to recover even more quickly than adult cats.

Do remember that your cat will require much less food after neutering so you will need to monitor your cat's weight and reduce the amount of food provided to prevent your cat from becoming too fat.

The cost of having your cat neutered is money well spent, as an unneutered animal will need a lot more veterinary attention over the years than a neutered one. In cases of owners with limited means there is often assistance available from animal charities to help pay for their cat to be neutered. Don't delay; if you own a young cat speak to your Veterinary Surgeon now!

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