

## *Spaying and Neutering*

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### **West Wind Dog Training**

Having spent years as an animal shelter volunteer and knowing many respectable breeders as well as many who are not, this is a very important issue to me. I strongly urge everyone to spay or neuter his or her pet (dogs, cats, rabbits, etc). Tens of thousands of unwanted pets of all ages and species are killed each year in shelters, abandoned, given to poor homes and dying deaths that are horrible. Packs of feral (domestic animals returned to a "wild" existence) cause damage to property, people, and livestock and spread diseases such as rabies.

#### **Benefits of spaying and neutering -**

##### ***Health:***

Neutering a male eliminates the possibility of testicular tumors and greatly reduces the chance of prostate problems. Neutering decreases the incidence of perianal tumors and hernias, which are commonly observed in older, unaltered males. Neutered males are less likely to try to escape a yard to find a female in season. This reduces the likelihood of them being hit by cars, getting into fights or lost. (Neutering is no substitute for a securely fenced yard, however).

Females spayed before their first estrous cycle ("heat") greatly reduces her chance of mammary tumors, ovarian cancer and uterine infection (all of which can be fatal and costly to treat). A spayed female eliminates the neighborhood stray males from camping out on your lawn trying to get at your female when she comes into "heat." Giving birth to a litter can be dangerous to your female. Some breeds have a high rate of cesarean sections, which are expensive and can be risky.

##### ***Temperament:***

Spaying and neutering before sexual maturity also offers a temperament benefit. Males neutered early in life tend to be less aggressive and less distracted. Neutered males are less likely to scent mark (real problem when they decide to mark inside the house). A spayed female also does not have hormonally based swings and will be more focused on you as well. A female with a litter can become very aggressive, even to family members. Spaying also makes your female a better companion.

##### ***Unwanted litters:***

Do you know that a single male and female and their offspring can produce thousands of offspring in six years? Think, a female can have a litter as young as six months and then have one every six months after that. Each litter can have an average of six offspring and

each female offspring will be able to breed at about six months of age, the math can be overwhelming! A male dog can impregnate as many females as he can get to in a day. Sit down and really play around with numbers... It gives me a headache... In addition, just because a puppy is cute, does not mean it will find a home. Every year, tens of thousands of dogs and puppies, purebred and crosses are euthanized in shelters. More die on the streets or live shortened lives of neglect, abuse and horrors.

***Risks associated with breeding:***

If this has not convinced you, let us look at some risks associated with breeding. What you see on Lassie and Disney with a loving mother dog (or cat) and her fat, healthy brood is Hollywood. Reality is that there can be serious risks involved with breeding. The mother may develop complications and require immediate medical intervention. Mothers may abandon puppies leaving you to hand rear. This include feeding a special formula every two hours, round the clock, stimulating the puppies to eliminate, checking weights daily, maintaining proper temperatures and humidity, etc. Even puppies whose mother cares for them may require supplemental feedings. Puppies can be stillborn or born horribly deformed. I know one breeder whose female gave birth to puppies that were no more than sacks of tissue and visible bone. Are your prepared to deal with things such as cleft palate, hydrocephaly or other problems some breeds may be prone to? Are you willing to face the fact you could have to euthanize puppies? Are you willing to make certain the mother is up to date on all inoculations and have the puppies get their's as well before going to homes? Diseases such as Parvovirus can kill puppies fast. Are you willing to risk your wonderful female becoming a biting terror as she protects puppies? Are you willing to risk the life of your pet?

***Cost of spaying or neutering:***

The cost of spaying and neutering is far less than you would spend getting a litter of puppies all their shots. It is less than paying for surgery for testicular tumors or treating a uterine infection. The cost of neutering is far less than having to patch up your male who tried to cross a busy street to get at an unspayed female. I have known males to try and cross six lane highways! The cost of spaying or neutering is less than having you carpets cleaned because your dog is marking his territory or your female spotted on your beige rug.

Responsible breeders are lucky if they break even when they sell puppies. Responsible breeders breed to improve a breed of dog, not to make money. The costs of tests alone to see if a dog is healthy to breed can cost more than what is recouped when puppies are sold. A responsible breeder breeds to improve the breed in looks, temperament, working ability and other areas. They do not breed to make puppies for retail sale. A puppy who they do not think fit their needs, is an improvement on their bloodlines, or is a solid representative of the breed may be sold with an agreement the puppy will be spayed or neutered to prevent undesirable traits from passing on.

**Myths**

***My pet will get fat and lazy.***

Spay and neutering may diminish your pet's want to roam. Inactivity and poor feeding habits are generally the culprits in your pet's weight gain. Feed a good quality food, give your pet exercise and adjust the food level to your pet's activity level.

***My pet's personality will change.***

The change will be for the better as explained above.

***My children should witness the miracle of birth.***

Get videotape. It is less expensive. In addition, as illustrated above, your children can witness far more than you wish... Avoid this excuse.

***We can make money selling the babies.***

The cost of raising a litter properly will consume the majority of your "profit." There are too many puppies and kittens that need homes. Why contribute to this? Finding good homes can be difficult. What will you do with "surplus" offspring? Can you afford to keep multiple animals? Are you zoned to keep multiple animals?

***I am concerned about anesthesia.***

This is a common concern. There is always a risk with any procedure that requiring anesthesia. Many vets use monitors to kept track of heart rate and respiration during surgery. Talk to you vet about your concerns. The medical benefits far outweigh the slight risk involved with spaying or neutering.

I hope I have given you something to think about and you will make the right choice. Just because a pet is purebred or cute does not mean it should be bred. Your dog can compete in almost all canine sports if spayed or neutered: obedience, agility, herding, tracking, field trials, and terrier trials. Your pet will enjoy a longer, happier life as well.

(Thanks to my vet for helping me with this)