



### ***The Benefits of Spaying And Neutering on Behavior***

Spaying and neutering is not only important because of the pet overpopulation problem, but it also reduces frustration. Typically the dogs that show a change in behavior problems due to spaying or neutering are dogs that are frustrated due to hormones. The dog's frustration is expressed as behavior problems. My clients find having their dog spayed or neutered does not reduce their dog's energy level or change its personality, but that their dog is calmer, more relaxed, more attentive to them and in general behavior problems are reduced. I feel these are all worthwhile reasons to have dogs spayed or neutered at the youngest age recommended by the vet.

A male dog can sense when a female dog is in heat 4 miles away in any direction. Dr. Karen Overall of Pennsylvania University states in her book Clinical Behavioral Medicine For Small Animals, male dogs that are intact are twice as reactive as neutered males, “the intact dog will react more easily, escalate the response more quickly, plateau in response at a higher level, ...become less reactive at a slower rate and may return to a higher baseline state of vigilance” (280). Unfortunately they have the tendency to become hyper reactive to any stimuli in

the environment. Hyper reactivity then becomes a learned behavior as well as a hormonal response. I see a myriad of behavior problems with dogs like this. They vary from, roaming, not coming when called, vocalization problems, destruction, and inattentiveness to owners. Overall also states, “removing hormonal fluctuations may make the dog more amiable to behavior modification” (112). Typically the only behavior problem we see due to a female dog being intact is aggression right before, during, or right after the estrous cycle.

Your veterinarian can fully explain the procedure of spaying and neutering and the age to have it done. Some veterinarians recommend these operations to be done to animals as young as 4 months old. Other veterinarians prefer waiting until 6 months of age. Almost all veterinarians agree it is best to perform the operation when your pet is still young.

One major reason for recommending spaying and neutering is our country's serious pet overpopulation problem. Every day over 70,000 puppies and kittens are born in the United States. When you compare this to the 10,000 human births each day it is easy to see there will not be enough homes for all of them. The surplus animals are either humanely euthanized or abandoned to suffer an uncertain short life and painful death.

Having your pet spayed or neutered can also be beneficial to its health. Statistics show dogs that have been spayed or neutered live longer than their unaltered friends. Male dogs have a reduced incidence of prostate cancer and prostate disorders when they are

neutered. The chance that your female dog will develop breast cancer is reduced by at least 90% if she is spayed before her first estrus cycle. It also eliminates the possibility of uterine or ovarian cancer. Let's face it: the healthier your pet is the more money you save in veterinary bills, so you benefit too.

For some people the operation to spay or neuter their pet at the appropriate time can be a financial burden. We are very lucky to have a low cost way to have your pet altered you can make an appointment with The City of Eugene Spay or Neuter Clinic. Their number is 682-3643. They usually have a two-month waiting period, so get an appointment early.

### References

Overall, Karen L. (1997). *Clinical Behavioral Medicine For Small Animals*. St Louis Mo.: Mosby-Year Book Inc