



Maidstone Veterinary Clinic

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REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR AND SPAYING IN CATS

The female cat reaches adolescence shortly after 5 months of age, depending on the time of year that she was born. This may be later if she reaches puberty during the non-breeding season. The breeding season in cats peaks in spring and autumn but litters can be born at any time of the year. During this time the cat can be “in season” or “calling” for approximately one week in every two or three until she becomes pregnant. During calling the female cat tends to become very affectionate, she may display behavior such as loud and persistent crying and frequent rubbing and rolling on the floor. Such behaviour and her scent will attract pestering tomcats from miles around. Pregnancy usually lasts 65 days or 9 weeks. The female cat can cycle and become *pregnant again as early as 2 weeks after kittening and while still feeding her litter*.

Consideration should be given to whether time is available to care for the pregnant cat and her subsequent litter. At times it can be very difficult to find homes for kittens and this necessitates having them destroyed. These are the main reasons for having your cat spayed, in addition spaying will remove the risk of uterine infection and will substantially reduce the future risk of mammary gland tumours.

An ovario-hysterectomy (spaying) is the operation to desex the female by removal of the ovaries and uterus. In the cat, it is generally done between five and six months of age, to avoid the first season. However it can be performed in older cats. If she already has a litter, she can be spayed as soon as the kittens can feed by themselves and survive on their own for a day (about four weeks old). Cats can be spayed during the first 3-4 weeks of pregnancy with no increase in risk to the cat.

SURGICAL PROCEDURE

Vaccinations need to be up to date.

Although commonly performed and regarded as routine, ovario-hysterectomy is major abdominal surgery, which is performed under general anaesthetic, in a fully equipped veterinary surgery. The hospital stay is usually for the day and recovery of the anesthetic is rapid.

HOME CARE

Feed the cat a normal diet after surgery. She should be eating by the day after the surgery at the latest. Limit the animal to indoors for several days after the surgery.

NOTIFY THE CLINIC IF THE FOLLOWING OCCURS:

- There is blood in your cat's urine.
- Your pet vomits.
- Your pet appears listless or depressed.
- Your pet is reluctant to eat.
- There appears to be swelling or discharge at the site of surgery.

STITCHES

Make arrangements to have your pet's stitches removed in 10-14 days after surgery.

REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR AND CASTRATION IN CATS

Male cats become sexually active at about 9 months of age but it can be younger, depending on how old they are during the breeding season.

Following puberty the male cat develops a number of often undesirable behavioral changes. He will become territorial and start to mark areas, often in the house, by spraying urine. This will by now have developed a particularly strong (and difficult to remove) odour. He will start to enlarge his territory by straying even farther from the house, particularly at night. By increasing his territory he will come into contact with other cats and so fight for dominance. Inflicted fight wounds can result in severe infections and abscesses which may require veterinary treatment. FIV (Feline Aids) can be spread through bites, so it is not surprising that those cats most commonly affected are non-neutered tomcats. Tomcats are also quite likely to go missing for days or weeks during the breeding season and they usually return in poor condition, if they return at all.

Finally, but not least, neutering prevents the fathering of often unwanted litters.

Castration is the term applied to the procedure of removing the male sex glands, the testicles. When performed just before sexual maturity at 6-8 months it will help prevent the above, undesirable habits from ever being formed. Castration of sexually mature cats tends to stop them fighting, but established behaviour patterns of night prowling may still continue.

Remember that cats are night hunters by nature and while castration will stop the tendency to compete for females, it will not usually diminish the cat's tendency to hunt.

The longer a tomcat is left to spray and fight, the less likely neutering will stop it.

SURGICAL PROCEDURE

Vaccinations need to be up to date

The operation is performed under general anaesthetic, and the testicles are removed through two small incisions in the scrotum. Recovery from anaesthesia is quite rapid, the hospital stay is short and healing prompt. There are no stitches to be removed.

HOME CARE

Feed the cat a normal diet. He should be eating by the day after surgery at the latest.

Limit the cat to indoors for one or two days.

NOTIFY THE CLINIC IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING OCCURS:

- There is blood in your cat's urine.
- Your pet vomits.
- Your pet seems listless or depressed.
- Your pet is reluctant to eat.
- There appears to be swelling or discharge at the site of surgery.

STITCHES:

There are no stitches to be removed after cat castration.

