

**HOLT VETERINARY CLINIC  
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## **PETHOOD AND/OR PARENTHOOD**

You will at some time decide if you want your pet to breed (remain intact) and produce young, or if you prefer to stop (neuter) his or her reproductive capability.

The surgical procedures to prevent reproduction for the male (castration) and female (ovariohysterectomy) are performed under anesthesia. They should be done, ideally, when your pet is between six months and one year old, but can be done earlier or later. (Many shelters find it expedient to spay or neuter puppies and kittens as early as 8 weeks of age. There is no medical advantage to performing these procedures at such a young age.) Whether your dog or cat is neutered or remains intact has medical and behavioral consequences. Please use the following considerations when making your decision.

### **DOGS**

**MALE:** The intact male dog tends to be more aggressive, fights more, and roams in search of female dogs who are in heat. If two or more intact dogs live together, they face the possibility of injuries resulting from rivalry to mate. Intact males have a higher rate of prostate and bladder disease and a higher incidence of hepatoid tumors of the skin. Many owners and their friends find inappropriate mounting behavior of intact dogs objectionable.

**FEMALE:** The intact female dog is prone to false pregnancies and resulting disposition aberrations. Neither allowing the dog to have pups, nor going through a heat cycle will improve a female dog's personality. If a dog has a personality problem, parenthood will generally change it for the worse. Increased aggression is the most frequently reported problem.

A female dog who has had one or more estrous cycles has a 40 percent chance of developing mammary gland cancer in her lifetime! The statistics are more favorable for the female who is spayed before any estrous cycles: Her chance of developing

mammary gland cancer is 0.01 percent.

The older intact female risks developing uterine infections that frequently become life-threatening. Some older female neutered dogs may develop urinary incontinence, but that is readily treatable if, and when, it happens.

### **CATS**

**MALE:** The intact adult male cat is nature's most efficient fighting machine. Unfortunately for him, the consequences include abscesses and a drastically shortened life expectancy.

An intact male cat marks his territory with a foul smelling spray of urine. Unfortunately for his owner, the territory all too often includes your home. Castration will eliminate the territorial marking, foul urine odor, and the majority of fights in most male cats.

**FEMALE:** The intact female cat produces kittens frequently. In a year, she can have as many as three litters with an average of three to five kittens each. If an intact female is not allowed to breed, she will have a prolonged estrous that will adversely affect her health and her relationship with you.

No link has been demonstrated between mammary tumors and presence or absence of reproductive capability in the female cat.

### **BOTH DOGS AND CATS**

Procedures such as vasectomies or tubal ligations are technically possible, but yield disappointing results. With these procedures, all behavioral characteristics associated with being intact remain.

Weight gain, which is blamed on neutering, is in fact caused by lack of exercise. Another cause is failure to modify calorie intake to an age and activity level appropriate for your pet as he or she matures.

ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE CAN BE ANSWERED BY CALLING OUR OFFICE.  
**PRACTICE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE, SURGERY AND DENTISTRY**