

## "Fixing" What Isn't Broken

Every pet owner knows that there are enormous responsibilities that go along with having a cat or dog. It must be fed and exercised, and it must be given love, attention, and protection. However, there is another responsibility that not all pet owners think about. That responsibility is spaying or neutering, or "fixing." What does "fixing" a pet mean? Simply put, it means a quick, cheap surgery that will prevent a pet from ever becoming a mother or father. This surgery solves problems that pet owners know about and some that they might not have considered before. In fact, all pet owners should be required to have their pets fixed because failure to do so overburdens shelters and increases the health risks of pets.

Firstly, everybody loves a cute new puppy or kitten. But those cute babies soon get bigger, and right now, there simply aren't enough homes for all of them. Some unwanted animals go to shelters, but many shelters have limited funds and limited space. They simply cannot keep all the animals they collect (Esmonde). If a cat or dog is not adopted within a certain time period, that animal is euthanized or in other words, put to death. Besides, not all unwanted animals go to a shelter. What happens to a homeless animal left out on the street? Pets are not wild animals. They cannot find fresh water or hunt their own food, especially in a city. They don't understand traffic laws, so they often get hit by vehicles. They are vulnerable to common illnesses—which can then spread to other animals, including pets. They are not tame, so they may attack other animals or people. In either case, the life of most unwanted animals is not long, but it is full of misery and pain, and it's also dangerous to other animals or people

who they meet. By not “fixing” one’s own animal, a pet owner will almost certainly be adding to this problem overburdened shelters.

Another thing to consider is the health of the pet itself. Animals, especially those who eat processed foods, are prone to the same illnesses as humans, like heart disease, kidney stones, and cancer. A spayed or neutered animal is at less risk from these diseases, especially cancer.

Furthermore, animals who are not fixed can sometimes behave aggressively when trying to find mates. They can injure themselves trying to escape from their homes, or they may fight with other animals. Additionally, while running free, they are in danger of getting hit by a vehicle. And finally, for females who become mothers, giving birth is not a safe process. For the ordinary pet owner, all these reasons should be strong enough to convince them to “fix” their pet.

Of course, some people will not agree. “I don’t want to give my animal an unnecessary surgery,” they will say. “Surgery is too risky and expensive.” That idea shows ignorance. Spaying or neutering should be done as soon as you get your pet—when he or she is young and healthy—and it is almost 100% safe. Your animal is in much more danger if not fixed, for the urge to run away from home will put your pet in extremely dangerous

situations. And almost all cities have a fund to help pay for the surgery. Just ask a vet or the local Humane Society. The cost can be as low as forty

dollars (“I have an animal”). Others might feel that this surgery will change their pet’s personality. They might think that a “fixed” dog might not be a good watchdog, for example. Or they may simply say “I like my pet the way he/she is” (Smith). This shows a basic misunderstanding of what the effects of spaying or neutering are. A pet’s personality, like a human’s personality, is his or her own, and it won’t change after a “fixing.” It’s true that some behaviors will change. A pet will not want to mark objects with urine as much, and females won’t go into heat every few months (“I have an animal”). A watchdog will still be vigilant, but it probably will not want to fight with other dogs as much. This simple surgery solves many behavior problems that can frustrate pet owners. The best solution is simply to get your pet “fixed” as soon as you get it home, as young as possible. That way, fewer bad habits will form.

There’s really no valid reason not to spay or neuter your pet. Whether considering the potential suffering of unborn animals, the health and comfort of one’s own pet, or the convenience as a pet owner, the facts all show that spaying or neutering is the way to go. It’s not only the convenient choice, but also morally the right choice, and one that all pet owners should make.