

Reasons for spaying:

1. Prevent unwanted pregnancies.
2. Control the stray population.
3. Avoid the inconvenience of season behaviour (calling cats, discharging dogs, visiting males, running away).
4. Reduce the risk of mammary cancer later in life.
5. Remove the risk of pyometra (a uterus infection) later in life.
6. Increase the lifespan of your pet.

Essential requirements for deciding not to spay:

1. You want puppies or kittens.
2. You are prepared to raise them properly.
3. You have good homes ready to place them in.

Bad reasons for not spaying:

1. Belief that the mother has an inner need to reproduce. This is anthropomorphism, beliefs extrapolated from the experience of humans and, here, with damaging effect. Female dogs and cats do not suffer psychological hardship if they do not reproduce. They deal with whatever situation they find themselves in.
2. Can't get time to have it done. The procedure is relatively short. Most cases go home the same day.
3. It's too expensive. Genuine hardship cases will be billed with sympathy and local animal charities may be able to help.

The spay (ovario-hysterectomy) procedure is performed daily at the British Veterinary Centre. As with most surgical procedures you should withdraw your pet's food from 10pm the night before surgery, and withdraw water on the morning of surgery.

A gentle pre-medication will be given shortly after your pet arrives with us. This has a calming effect and is also a painkiller to help with any discomfort caused by the procedure. With routine spays discomfort appears to be minimal.

The surgery will usually be done in the morning and your pet will be ready to go home later in the afternoon. A small incision is made in the abdomen to allow completion of the procedure. We usually choose absorbable sutures which disappear on their own and save you coming back for suture removal. Occasionally we use non-absorbable nylon sutures in the skin. You must have these removed about ten days post op. (a very simple exercise done as a routine consultation free of charge). Depending on the pre-med and anaesthetic choice, pets may be slightly drowsy post op. This is rarely important and wears off as the hours pass but please feel free to call us if you have any concerns regarding post op care or the condition of your pet.

Complications following routine spays are rare. With today's drugs, techniques, monitoring equipment and expertise, the general risks of surgery are minimised to a very low level.

Perhaps the commonest serious risk following spaying is weight gain but this is within your control. Metabolic rates and activity levels reduce as pets age anyway, but spaying usually means that your pet requires less food. Monitor weight every two weeks as part of your pet's routine care. Detection of gain means that you should consider calorie controlled diets and your vet should be able to advise you, perhaps suggesting a balanced but reduced calorie food.

Dissolving sutures may cause a firm, dry, small (pea or grape size) swelling at the operation site 10 to 20 days post op. It seems to happen more often in cats and is the body's reaction to the presence of suture material. It will disappear as the material dissolves in the following week or two.

A watery, blood or coloured discharge, at the op. site should be reported to us. This could mean that your pet has a seroma or post-op infection at the surgical incision and may need antibiotics or other treatment. (Rarely seen but easily dealt with if you let us know).

A small number of female dogs will lose urethral muscle tone due to reduced levels of oestrogen following spay. This can cause urinary incontinence but is easily dealt with in most cases with medication. We once believed that spaying later (after the first season) would prevent this complication and that may be true in a minority of cases. In most cases the timing probably makes no difference and for many people there are advantages in not waiting for the first season. Talk it over with your vet.

NOTE: There is no risk free situation. Not spaying your pet carries higher risks to her health than the procedure. Complications are relatively rare with routine spays and usually dealt with easily if they do occur.