

## SPAY/NEUTER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



### What is the difference between spay and neuter?

- Both “spay” and “neuter” refer to the reproductive sterilization of dogs, cats and other animals. It is also sometimes called “fixing” an animal. “Spay” refers to the surgical removal of the ovaries and uterus of a female pet. “Neuter” refers the surgical removal of the testicles from a male pet.



### How old does my cat or dog have to be or weigh before I can spay/neuter him/her?

- For many years, veterinarians were taught that cats and dogs had to be a year old to be spayed or neutered. Later, they were taught that six months was appropriate. Today we know that kittens and pups can be spayed or neutered at the age of two months (or two pounds). The American Veterinary Medical Association has endorsed this practice called Early Age Neutering; the animals recover more quickly from surgery when they are young. Today some vets will spay/neuter at eight weeks of age, while other adhere to the old practice of six months of age. The average age at which pets are spayed or neutered is four months.



### Should I allow my female cat/dog to have a litter before getting her spayed?

- Absolutely not! The health benefits of spaying before the first heat cycle are well documented and there are already too many wonderful puppies and kittens who need homes.



### What are the benefits of spaying/neutering my cat or dog?

- Spaying your female at a young age prevents uterine infections, such as pyometra, which can be fatal. Infections of the uterus are a major cause of illness in unspayed pets.
- Spaying reduces the incidence of mammary (breast) cancer. This is a very common cancer in unspayed females, and the most common cancer to spread to the lungs.
- Spaying can be done while your pet is pregnant. While this means aborting the offspring, it is more humane than taking them to the pound later. Also, for every litter you bring into the world, a litter at the pound dies.
- Spaying eliminates unwanted males from harassing your pet.



### How long after my female cat/dog has had kittens/puppies can I get her spayed?

- Mother cats or dogs can become pregnant while nursing. It is important to keep a nursing mother away from other adult cats/dogs of the opposite sex. One can spay a mother as soon as the kittens or pups are weaned, (5 to 6 weeks for kittens and 4 to 5 weeks for puppies) and because of the risk of pregnancy this should be done.



### Are there any possible side effects to spaying/neutering my cat or dog?

- As with any surgery, there are always risks involved with general anesthesia.



## Will my pet's behavior potentially improve after spay/neuter?

- Male cats tend to reduce their territorial spraying depending upon the age at which they are neutered. If neutered young enough, before they develop the habit of spraying, they may never develop the behavior.
- Neutered male cats and dogs fight less resulting in fewer battle scars, contagious diseases, and abscesses. They also wander less since they aren't interested in pursuing the female in heat. Therefore, their chances of being hit by a car or getting lost are greatly reduced.
- Many pets become calmer and better behaved after being spayed/neutered.



## What is the difference between a feral cat and a house cat?

- A feral cat is a cat that was born outside and has had limited to no social interaction with humans. A house cat who has been abandoned outside may eventually exhibit signs of being a feral cat and will have limited or no social interaction with humans. When we spay/neuter a feral cat, we ear tip the cat to indicate to others that it has been spayed/neutered. An ear tip is performed by removing the very tip of the left ear. This is not painful to the cat and is necessary to show that the cat has already been spayed/neutered.

NAWS Spay/Neuter Clinic provides low cost spay/neuter and vaccination services to qualified pet owners living in the Northland. Applicants must provide proof of residency and eligibility to participate in this program. Proof of residency could include a drivers' license, utility bill, or property tax receipt. Proof of eligibility could include a current Food Stamps EBT card, Medicaid card, WIC card or written notification of approval for Food Stamp, Medicaid or Social Security Benefits (must meet income guideline requirements in regards to Social Security benefits).

If you do not qualify under our income guidelines, we would be more than happy to provide you with a referral to another clinic.

For more information, please call us at 816-336-1888. You must complete an application and schedule an appointment for our spay/neuter and vaccination services.