I found this American article (http://www.petplace.com/cats/pros-and-cons-of-spaying-and-neutering-in-cats/page1.aspxutm_source=catcrazynews001et&utm_medium=email&utm_content=petplace_article&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter#) recently and thought that it raised some fantastic arguments: Although the stats are US specific, Australian shelters, pounds, and animal rescue organisations are pushed to their limits all year round and the number of animals being destroyed every day is shocking and unnecessary.

It's time to start thinking about spaying or neutering your cat. But, you are not quite sure if it is the right thing to do. If you're wondering whether you should just leave your cat as nature intended, consider the positive and negative aspects of spaying and neutering before making your decision.

First, what does neutering mean? Neutering is a procedure used to "de-sex" an animal. This procedure has been used to control animal population growth, reduce unwanted sexual behavior in pets , and decrease or eliminate the possibility of certain disease conditions later in life, such as pyometra or infection in the uterus.

Castration is a term used to describe the removal of the gonads (testicles) in male animals. Spaying is a term used to describe the sterilization procedure of females. The procedure of spaying most often consists of removal of both the ovaries and uterus, which is called an ovariohysterectomy.

Both procedures are performed under general anesthesia and both involve a surgical incision.

Neutering is done most commonly at or around six months of age. However, many veterinarians perform this procedure earlier – as early as 8 to 10 weeks in some situations. Early neutering can be done safely and has a number of advantages, especially in cases of pet adoption.

Spaying – The Positive Side

- Spaying removes the risk of pregnancy.

Pet overpopulation is a serious problem and by allowing your cat to have litters, you are adding to the problem. Finding homes for your new family additions is not as easy as you

may think. Even if you choose to keep the kittens, you will have the additional cost of vaccines, parasite control, toys and food for several pets. In addition to costs, the health of the mother can be in jeopardy during delivery. Some new mothers can have serious complications delivering kittens and can even develop health problems during nursing. All these potential problems can be avoided by spaying your cat.

- Spaying makes for a calmer cat.

Without the drive to mate, your cat may be quieter and won't be prone to cat calls and the incessant need to seek out a mate. The spayed pet no longer attracts males and their annoying advances and serenades. Spayed cats are also easier to get along with. They tend to be more gentle and affectionate.

- Spaying keeps your cat healthier.

A final positive aspect of spaying your cat is that spayed cats tend to have fewer health problems. Spaying is the removal of the ovaries and uterus. Without these organs, ovarian cysts, uterine infections and cancer of the reproductive tract are no longer a concern.

Spaying – The Negative Side

- Spaying means sterilization. (Personally I think this is a positive)
- Spaying will result in the sterilization of your cat, and she will no longer have the ability to become pregnant. In the era of pet overpopulation and the fact that thousands of unwanted pets are euthanized each year, this is really not so bad. (Personally I think this is a positive)
- Spaying may cause weight gain.

Some cats may gain weight after spaying and as they get older. Unspayed animals typically have a strong mating desire and can expend a lot of energy seeking a mate and reproducing. Without this energy burden, your cat may eat the same amount but not burn off as many calories. Cutting back on food intake or increasing your pets activity will help reduce weight gain.

Neutering – The Positive Side

- Neutering removes the risk of pregnancy.

Pet overpopulation is a serious issue and by allowing your cat to breed, you are adding to the problem. Although you may not own the female cat, and you are not burdened with finding homes for those new kittens, someone else is. Even if you accept your responsibility and choose to keep the kittens, you will have the additional cost of vaccines, parasite control, toys and food for several pets.

- Neutering makes for a cleaner, calmer pet.

Another positive aspect of neutering your cat is that neutering can result in a calmer, and sometimes cleaner, home. Without the drive to mate, your cat may be quieter and not prone to cat calls and an incessant need to seek out a mate. The neutered cat no longer feels the need to seek out and serenade females. He no longer has the stress of needing to mark his territory and urinate throughout the house and yard. Neutered cats are also easier to get along with.

They tend to more gentle and affectionate. Neutered males tend to roam less and typically are not involved in as many fights with other animals.

- Neutering keeps your pet healthier.

A final positive aspect of neutering your cat is that neutered cats tend to have fewer health problems. Neutering is the removal of the testicles. Without these organs, testicular cancer is no longer a concern and the risk of prostate problems is reduced. For those people who would like to sterilize their cat but do not wish to alter his appearance, testicular implants are available.

Neutering – The Negative Side

- Neutering is sterilization. (Personally I think this is a positive)

Neutering will result in the sterilization of your cat.

- Neutering may cause weight gain.

Some cats gain weight after neutering. Intact animals typically have a strong mating desire and can expend a lot of energy seeking a mate and reproducing. Without this energy burden, your cat may eat the same amount but not burn off as many calories. Cutting back on his food or increasing his activity can help reduce the weight gain.

Last year about 17 million dogs and cats were turned over to animal shelters . Only one out of every 10 taken in to the shelters found a home. This means that over 13.5 million had to be destroyed. The tragedy is that this is unnecessary. Much of the problem could be eliminated by simple surgery: Spaying and neutering operations are performed under general anesthesia and are quite painless. By neutering pets, owners can help lower the numbers of unwanted and homeless creatures.

September 2008,

I actually had the privilege of watching the desexing operation of a 3 month old male kitten

today. The kitten weighed in at about 1.3kg, which is normal for his age. From start to finish the procedure took literally 7 minutes. At minute 8 and as he had just come out of the anesthetic I pick him up and he purred.

I have watched him closely since and have been amazed that he has paid no attention to "down there" at all. It is now just on an hour since his procedure and he is running madly round my lounge room despite my efforts to keep him calm and quiet. He has walked up to the food bowl and eaten small amount of wet food on three separate occasions. Currently he is running around on me trying desperately to get my attention while I type this. He is rubbing up against me and wanting pats. I keep putting him on the ground but he jumps straight back up so I now have to type one handed so that I can pat him with my other hand. I really and honestly don't think he has noticed that the family jewels are missing!! He hasn't stopped purring so I don't think he is too worried and he certainly does't appear to be in any pain at all. He can't work out if he wants to sit and get pats or play - It is a really tough decision for an energetic little kitten! All in all any nerves I had about desexing kittens at this age have been put to rest.

Q: Will desexing my kitten affect his/her personality?

A: If done at the right time there will very little change in personality. If anything the changes will usually be desirable. Desexing will often make kittens even more affectionate and often calm down overly active or slightly agressive cats. You will not have the problems that come with and entire/un-desexed cat.

Males will spray a very strong smelling urine around to mark their territory, the odor of which is overpowering and nearly impossible to eradicate. If allowed out males will fight with all the local toms, often coming home with torn ears or a nasty abscess requiring a trip to the vet, if this occurs I will soon loose my good looks. Female are even more of a problem, if this is possible. They will attract all the local toms when they are calling so that there is often more smell than if you owned a male yourself, and it is very difficult to keep this very determined lady inside. If you manage to keep her in, she will call more and more frequently until she is calling almost continually, and she will become more and more frustrated and thinner and thinner as frustrated ladies have more important things on their minds than food! If she is allowed out, or escapes, she will present you with litter after litter of mongrel kittens who will become increasingly hard to place and who will eat you out of house and home. Not to mention the exposure to feline aids and other sexually transmitted diseases.

As mentioned above desexing (also known as altering) will often calm hyperactive and naughty kittens down. When desexed the kitten will have much more time for people and can be a real pet in the fullest sense of the word.

Q: When should I desex my kitten?

A: Some breeders may choose to sell their kittens desexed which is likely to be law within the next 2 years and this is usually fine.

Where possible and in my personal opinion I don't think kittens should be desexed under the age of 10 weeks without vet recommendation. It would be highly unlikly that any reputable vet would desex a kitten under the age of 10 weeks.

In the case of male kittens the procedure is very quick and a speedy recovery is likely so desexing a boy even at 10+ weeks is usually ok.

In the case of female kittens the procedure is more invasive and a slightly longer recovery is common consequently and where possible I don't think the females should be under 11 or 12 weeks before being desexed. The weight of the female is important and needs to be considered before desexing occurs.

With both male and female kittens there are risks involved at any age and death under anesthetic can occur.

Where possible I think the kitten should at least be 11 weeks old before desexing. Obviously the general health and size/weight of the kitten needs to be considered before determining the right time to desex. Most vets recommend that desexing occur between 3 months and 6 months but every kitten needs to be assessed on an individual basis. Please consult your vet to determine what is right for you and your kitten.

Q: I have been told by so many people to NOT buy my kitten desexed (also known as Spaying for girls and Neurering for boys) and that he/she should be desexed at 6-8 months?

Please read Buying Entire v's Desexed .

Don't discount or rule out getting a kitten because he/she is desexed. Desexing a kitten at 12 weeks and desexing a kitten at 24 weeks (6 months) is going to make little to no difference and often buying a kitten desexed will save you money as well.

A cat **can** be sexually mature at 6-8 months (and sometimes even younger) so at this age you may find that a male kitten has started to spray and a female kitten is calling or worse pregnant.

The best article I have found on desexing kittens is (http://www.winnfelinehealth.org/Health/spay-neuter.html) and although it is referring mainly to the US market they point out that desexing on kittens under 6 months and typically between the ages of 8 weeks and 16 weeks has been practised in the US for over 25 years. Even here in Australia many Shelters and the RSPCA will sell 8 and 9 week old kittens desexed.

They also point out that "today's pedigreed cat breeders are increasingly requesting early-age altering from veterinarians, so kittens destined for pet homes can be altered before sale. **Breeders who do so are ensuring any kittens they sell will not contribute to the tragedy of pet overpopulation.**

In the U.S., it is estimated that four to 15 million healthy cats are euthanized every year because they do not have homes. Figures are not readily available for Canada, but the magnitude of the

problem may not be any less daunting. We do know the leading cause of death for healthy unwanted cats in Canada is euthanasia. In some shelters, between 50 and 90 per cent of cats taken in are euthanized, simply because no one wants them.

Studies have shown that, despite economic incentives such as low-cost spay and neuter services, many cats and dogs adopted from shelters have one litter before they are sterilized or are never sterilized at all. Shelter-mandated spay and neuter programs are often poorly supported by adoptive owners, despite pre-payment of surgery fees, good screening of potential adoptive owners and altering contracts.

In turn, about one-third of cats and dogs are relinquished to shelters because they are from unwanted litters. **Early-age altering is therefore a valuable tool in the fight against pet overpopulation and the needless euthanasia of healthy homeless pets.**

People working to reduce the problem of surplus dogs and cats in the U.S. pioneered the concept of early altering. **Surgical sterilization is the most effective means of population control, but delaying the surgery until after sexual maturity defeats the purpose.** Animal shelters advocate mandatory altering, but many adopted cats and dogs either are never altered or have least one litter first."

Q: What do I need to know about the desexing operation and care after surgery?

Your vet will recommend that you don't feed you kitten for at least 12 hours before going under anesthetic. This is because a cat or kitten could vomit and choke.

You may or may not be given some antibiotic to give you kitten after the procedure. This is to reduce infection.

Please try to keep you female kitten from pulling out her stitches. If she does manage to remove them within the first few days please return her to your vet and they will asses to see if

they need to be restiched. They may also offer you a collar/bucket to put around your cats head to stop her from removing them again.

You may notice a large raised lump (about the size of a large marble) at the site of the wound about 12 - 24 hours after surgery on female kittens. This is normal and caused by the disolving of internal stitches. It will slowly disapear over time and will probably be gone altogether about 2 weeks after surgery. If the lump becomes golfball size contact your vet to ensure the external stitches arn't stretching and causing pain.

You will probably need to return the female aprox 10 days after surgery to have the stitches removed.

Don't be suprised if your kitten recovers quickly and is running around in no time at all but please don't encourage active play for at least the first 48 hours after surgery especially in female kittens.

I can't afford to desex my cat

I found the following article on this site
(http://www.cat-world.com.au/catworlddesexing.htm) and thought that it was spot on so I would share it.....

Desexing is a relatively cheap operation, and if money is an issue are you prepared for the unexpected? what would happen if the cat needed expensive veterinary care after a car accident or being attacked by another cat? Pet ownership is a responsibility, and every person considering getting a pet should be fully aware of the costs, and demands before making a decision. Cats can live for up to 20 years, and can cost quite a sum of money. The cost of desexing your cat is a mere drop in the ocean compared to the potential costs if you keep the cat

entire. For example:

If the queen has problems giving birth, she may need an emergency caesarean.

The queen can develop mastitis, again requiring veterinary care. If your queen develops mastitis, it may fall upon you to hand feed the kittens, every 2-4 hours (day & night). After they have been fed, you will need to stimulate them to go to the loo.

As stated above, there are several health risks associated with keeping an entire cat. All of which can be costly to have treated.

There is also the moral debate. Every year, millions of cats are euthanised because there just aren't enough homes for them. There are shelters all over the world full of cats who desperately need a good home & somebody to love them. Each pet owner should consider this before adding to the overpopulation of cats by breeding their own cat.

If you are serious about becoming a breeder, you should buy the best purebred cat money can buy, and register yourself with one of the many cat clubs. Before breeding your first litter, you should spend several months or even years researching the ins & outs of feline husbandry, genetics, disease & breeding. You will also need to know if your breed of choice is prone to any health/genetic defects. If so, can they be tested for? Arm yourself with as much knowledge as you possibly can. There is far more to breeding than putting a male & a female together & waiting 63 days.

Both male & female can be desexed from approximately 10 weeks of age. For more information on early desexing check out the following article by copying and pasting this link: http://www.winnfelinehealth.org/Health/spay-neuter.html

Suchi is a registered breeder with the New South Wales Cat Fanciers' Association Incorporated. Lic No 125232.

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