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NEUTERING

What is meant by castration or neutering?
Neutering and castration are the common terms used to describe the surgical procedure known scientifically as orchidectomy or orchiectomy. In this procedure, both testicles are removed in order to sterilize a male cat.

Why should I have my cat neutered?
Neutering is very beneficial to the health of the cat, especially if performed at an early age. Following puberty, which occurs at approximately eight to nine months of age, the male cat often develops a number of undesirable behavioral changes. He will become territorial and start to mark areas, even inside the house, by spraying urine. This urine has a particularly offensive odor and is difficult to remove. As the tomcat reaches sexual maturity, he will start to enlarge his territory, straying ever farther from the house, particularly at night. It is for this reason that many of the cats that are hit by automobiles are non-neutered males. By increasing the size of his territory, he increases the likelihood that he will come into contact with other cats and will get into fights for territorial dominance. Inflicted fight wounds can result in severe infections and abscesses. Diseases such as FIV and FeLV, which can cause AIDS-like syndromes and cancers in cats, are spread through cat bites, these cats are most commonly affected by such incurable diseases. Last, but not least, neutering prevents unwanted litters and the needless deaths of tens of millions kittens and cats each year.

The longer a tomcat sprays and fights, the less likely neutering will stop these behaviors.

When should I have my cat neutered?
In most cases, it is recommended to neuter your cat before the onset of puberty. Puberty normally begins between six and ten months of age. The actual age chosen for neutering will depend upon the preference of your veterinarian. Many veterinarians recommend neutering at around five to seven months of age. Please contact your veterinary hospital for further details regarding their specific sterilization policies.

What does the operation involve?
Your cat will undergo a general anesthetic. You will need to withhold food for twelve (12) hours prior to surgery. However, your pet should have free access to water during most of the pre-operative fasting period. Your veterinarian will advise you how long to withhold water before surgery.

In male cats, both of the testicles are removed through a small incision in the scrotum. Since the incisions are very small, and since stitches may cause irritation of the sensitive skin of the scrotum, it is rare for the incisions to be sutured.

What surgical complications could arise?
In general, complications are rare during neutering surgery, however, as with all surgical procedures, there is always a small risk:

Anesthetic complication

It is always possible that any pet could have an adverse reaction following the administration of any drug. Such cases are impossible to predict, but fortunately are extremely rare.

One potential danger arises from the cat not being fasted properly prior to anesthesia. It is essential that all instructions are strictly followed.

In addition, any signs of illness should be reported to your veterinarian prior to an operation.

Post-operative infection

This may occur internally or around the incision wound. In most cases the infection can be controlled with antibiotics.

What adverse affects might neutering have on my cat?
In the vast majority of cases no adverse affects are noted following neutering. In certain cats, notably the Siamese breed, the hair that grows back over an operation site may be noticeably darker, believed to be due to a difference in the skin temperature. This darker patch may grow out with the following molt as the hair is naturally replaced.