



THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES

## Benefits of spay and neuter

**THE DECISION TO SPAY (FOR FEMALES) OR NEUTER (FOR MALES)** your dog or cat may be one of the most important actions you take to give them a long and healthy life. Spaying and neutering are routine procedures performed by licensed veterinarians and permanently prevent animals from reproducing. Millions of pets are spayed or neutered every year at veterinary hospitals and animal shelters around the country.

### Increasing the benefits, reducing the risks



**Longer life:** Dogs and cats who are spayed or neutered live significantly longer than those who are not sterilized. This impact is most profound in cats: One study showed that spayed cats lived 39% longer and neutered cats lived 62% longer than unaltered cats.



**Healthier life:** Spaying your female dog or cat will eliminate her chances of developing ovarian cancer, uterine cancer and pyometra (an infection of the uterus). When spayed before her first heat cycle, your dog's risk of mammary cancer (the most common cancer in female dogs) is nearly eliminated. For males, neutering eliminates the risk of testicular cancer and some prostate disorders. Sterilization also reduces the risk of your pet contracting a sexually transmitted infection.



**Better behavior:** Spaying or neutering may reduce the chances of your pet developing unwanted behaviors such as urine marking and mounting. It can also reduce aggression and roaming, making your pet less likely to fight with other animals or to be hit by a car.




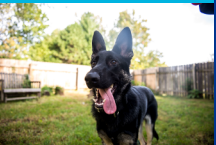
**Cost savings:** Spaying or neutering can save you substantial money over your pet's lifetime. Surgery to treat uterine infections, prostatitis or testicular/mammary cancer can cost thousands of dollars. When you adopt a pet from a shelter or rescue, they are often already spayed or neutered!



**Life savings:** As spaying and neutering have become more common, the number of animals euthanized in shelters has dropped dramatically, saving millions of lives each year.



# Summary of age of spay/neuter recommendations

SHELTER DOG OR CAT -MALE OR FEMALE	COMMUNITY CAT MALE OR FEMALE	OWNED CAT MALE OR FEMALE	OWNED DOG SMALL BREED, MALE OR FEMALE	OWNED DOG LARGE BREED, MALE OR FEMALE	FREE-ROAMING DOG MALE OR FEMALE
					
Prior to adoption (as young as 6 weeks)	Any age after 6 weeks	Prior to 5 months of age	Prior to adoption (as young as 6 weeks)	Age varies, best to discuss with your veterinarian	Prior to 5 months of age

## When to spay/neuter



Cats and dogs can be safely spayed or neutered as young as 6 weeks old, and sterilizing pets before they hit puberty increases many of the health and behavior benefits. Sterilization before 5 months old prevents accidental litters, and the surgery is less complicated, resulting in a quicker recovery. Current evidence supports early age spay/neuter of cats and small dogs. The optimal time to spay/neuter large dogs is less clear, and recommendations for owned, large dogs who do not roam freely should consider professional guidelines, veterinary advice, owner preferences and the health of individual animal. Shelters should aim to sterilize dogs and cats before adoption or as soon as possible afterward.

## Where to spay/neuter

Contact your veterinarian to schedule your pet's spay/neuter appointment, and encourage your family and friends to talk to their veterinarian about spay/neuter as well. If cost is a barrier, there may be low-cost spay/neuter options provided through an animal shelter or nonprofit clinic in your area. You can also search on the websites below:

- [AnimalLeague.org/get-involved/spay-usa](https://www.animalleague.org/get-involved/spay-usa)
- [FixFinder.org/directory-search](https://www.fixfinder.org/directory-search)
- [PetHelpFinder.org](https://www.pethelpfinder.org) (click on "Veterinary Services")
- [UnitedSpayAlliance.org](https://www.unitedspayalliance.org)

## What about rabbits?

Spaying your companion rabbit means they can live a longer life as well. Uterine cancer occurs at an extremely high rate in rabbits who are not spayed, which is one reason that spayed rabbits live more than twice as long as unsplayed ones! Neutered male rabbits are also healthier, easier to handle and less likely to spray urine.

## About the HSUS

We fight the big fights to end suffering for all animals. Together with millions of supporters, the Humane Society of the United States takes on puppy mills, factory farms, the fur trade, trophy hunting, animal cosmetics testing and other cruel industries. Through our rescue, response and sanctuary work, as well as other direct services, we help thousands of animals in need every year. We fight all forms of animal cruelty to achieve the vision behind our name: a humane society.

FIRST PAGE, CHRISTOPHER LANE/AP IMAGES FOR HSI. THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GARETH PATTERSON/AP IMAGES FOR THE HSUS; MARCO GARCIA/AP IMAGES FOR THE HSUS; LISA J. GODFREY/FOR THE HSUS; KEITH SHERIFF/AP IMAGES FOR HSI; HAYDEN FOWLER/THE HSUS; KATHY MILANI/HSI; SHEA MICHELLE; MICHELLE RILEY/THE HSUS.



## Deconstructing the spay/neuter debate



Visit [HumanePro.org](https://www.humanepro.org) to learn more about spaying/neutering your pet.



→ For more information,  
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