

## **Neutering factsheet: Female cat**

### ***Why I should neuter my female cat?***

The decision whether or not to have your female cat neutered (or “spayed”) can be daunting and there can seem to be a lot of contradictory information available on the subject. Here at the Beaumont Sainsbury Animal Hospital (BSAH) we recommend that female cats are neutered from 4 months of age on health grounds and this recommendation is based on scientific evidence.

### ***What does having my cat spayed entail?***

The procedure involves removing your pet’s Ovaries (“ovariectomy” or OVE) under a general anaesthetic, which usually just requires your pet to be with us as a day patient. In the UK it has been more traditional to remove both the ovaries and womb (“ovariohysterectomy” or OVH), but at the BSAH we prefer the OVE procedure as we believe it results in a quicker surgery with less damage to tissue. However, if during the surgery we find any abnormality of the womb, we will undertake a full OVH at no extra charge, it should be noted that this may be more likely in older pets.

Both OVE and OVH will result in your pet no longer coming into season or being able to have kittens.

### ***What are the health benefits of spaying my cat?***

- ✓ Spaying your cat can reduce the chance of her developing mammary gland tumour (breast cancer), the most common type of malignant tumour in female cats.  
This effect is strongly related to timing of the surgery, with the best protective effect achieved if your cat is spayed from 4 months old and this protective effect reduces significantly after 2 years of age.
- ✓ Female cats that continue to cycle without being mated are at increased risk of developing cystic ovarian disease and abnormal thickening of the lining of the womb. This in turn leads to increased risk of developing an infection of the womb (“pyometra”), a debilitating condition which can lead to chronic poor health and requires surgery to treat.
- ✓ OVE eliminates your pet’s chances of developing ovarian cancer.
- ✓ Although pregnancy and kitting are natural processes, just as with humans, things can go wrong, can be dangerous for your pet and may even require an emergency caesarean section resulting in large vet bills. Neutering eliminates the risk of accidental pregnancy and its associated health risks and costs. It also avoids the necessity of finding homes for kittens, when shelter charities already have to deal with too many unwanted cats and kittens. A single female cat can be responsible for the production 20,000 kittens over 5 years.

- ✓ Spaying will prevent your pet coming into season (which is every 3 weeks for a normal cat). Cats in season can become very vocal and their behaviour very disturbed which owners often find difficult to deal with.

***Are there any downsides to spaying my cat?***

Studies have shown that neutering can reduce a cat's metabolic requirement by 25% and as a result they can put weight on more easily. It is a misconception that the process of spaying itself causes the weight gain and it is easy to keep your neutered pet slim by controlling the amount of food that she has.

The procedure requires that your pet undergoes a general anaesthetic, which has inherent risks. At the BSAH we give all patients a thorough pre-anaesthetic examination to minimise the risk of general anaesthetic.

If any of the above issues concern you, or you have heard anything elsewhere regarding neutering that you are worried may affect your pet, then please do not hesitate to book an appointment with one of our veterinary surgeons to discuss your concerns.

***On the basis of current evidence, our veterinary team at the BSAH recommend female cats are neutered from 4 months of age and before their first season to receive the maximum health benefits.***