

## **Early-Age Neuter/Spay**

Early spay/neuter starting at 8 weeks of is endorsed by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), Humane Society of the United States, the American Kennel Club, the Cat Fanciers Association, the American Humane Association and many other organizations.

As long as a pup or kitten weighs more than two pounds and is 8 weeks old, he or she can be neutered or spayed. Many veterinarians practice safe early sterilization. Some of the many benefits of early sterilization: faster healing and recovery time, and the earlier a pet is spayed or neutered, the less chance of developing a number of serious diseases and disorders. For example, a female spayed before her first heat (six to nine months of age) has one-seventh the risk of developing mammary cancer as does an intact female.

In the 1970s, the veterinary medical and other animal protection communities began questioning the standard age minimum of six months for surgical neutering of dogs and cats. Altering pets between 6 and 7 months was based more on tradition than on medical reasons. Among reasons to revisit the minimum age: many young animals were being adopted out of shelters without being neutered at the time of adoption. Unfortunately, some adopters failed to abide by their adoption contracts that called for them to have the adopted pets neutered, resulting in more litters of unwanted animals.

Some veterinarians began practicing early-age sterilization in the 1970s when safe pediatric anesthetic techniques became available. With the advent of early-age procedures, shelters were able to have young animals neutered before or at adoption. There has been no evidence of increased risks to cats or dogs sterilized as early as eight weeks of age. An increasing number of shelters and animal rescue groups have adopted the practice of early-age neuter/spay, enabling them to make sure all of their adopted animals are sterilized.

### **Articles about early spay-neuter:**

[http://www.animalsheltering.org/resource\\_library/search\\_results.html?librarytopic=pediatric\\_sterilization](http://www.animalsheltering.org/resource_library/search_results.html?librarytopic=pediatric_sterilization)

(this article also contains the AVMA position statement on early-age neutering)

<http://www.bestfriends.org/nmhp/resources.html> (download the Juvenile Spay/Neuter PDF)

<http://www.king.igs.net/~brica/esp.htm>

<http://www.winnfelinehealth.org/reports/early-neuter.html>