**OVARIOHYSTERECTOMY OR SPAY SURGERY**

**What is meant by ovariohysterectomy or spaying?**
Spaying is the common term used to describe the surgical procedure known scientifically as an ovariohysterectomy. In this procedure, the ovaries and uterus are completely removed in order to sterilize a female cat.

**Why should I have my cat spayed?**
We recommend that all non-breeding cats be sterilized. Here are several health benefits associated with spaying your cat.

- Spaying eliminates the risk of ovarian and uterine cancers.
- Breast cancer is the number one type of cancer diagnosed in intact or unspayed female cats.
- If your cat is spayed before her first heat cycle, there is less than ½ of 1% (0.5%) chance of developing breast cancer.
- With every subsequent heat cycle, the risk of developing breast cancer increases.
- After 2½ years of age an ovariohysterectomy gives no protective benefit against developing breast cancer.
- Pets with diabetes or epilepsy should be spayed to prevent hormonal changes that may interfere with medications.

**Are there other benefits to spaying my cat?**
The most obvious benefit is the prevention of unplanned pregnancies. There is no medical or scientific reason for letting your cat have a litter before she is spayed.

Once a cat reaches puberty, usually at around seven months of age, she will have a heat or estrus cycle every two to three weeks for most of the year, unless she becomes pregnant. She will be “in heat” or receptive to mating for approximately one week in each cycle. During “heat” she may display unsociable behavior such as loud and persistent crying and frequent rubbing and rolling on the floor. This behavior coupled with her scent, will attract male cats from miles around. Removal of the ovaries will stop her estrus cycles.

**When should I have my cat spayed?**
Spaying should be performed before the first estrus or “heat cycle”. Most cats are spayed between four and six months of age although some veterinarians choose to spay cats at two to three months of age.

**What does a spay surgery involve?**
This is a major surgical procedure that requires a full general anesthetic. With modern anesthetics and monitoring equipment, the risk of a complication is low. The risk of complications will be reduced with pre-anesthetic blood testing and IV fluids. You will need to fast your cat the night prior to surgery. Most cats return home within forty-eight hours after surgery.
Your veterinarian will examine your pet. Pre-anesthetic blood testing and IV fluids are strongly recommended. If everything is acceptable, your pet will then be anesthetized. If you opted for IV fluids an intravenous catheter is placed to administer the anesthetic and to provide fluid therapy during the surgery. After your pet is anesthetized, a breathing tube will be placed in her trachea or windpipe. This will allow the delivery of oxygen and the gas anesthetic directly into the lungs. The operation is performed through a relatively small incision made most commonly in the midline of the abdomen, just below the umbilicus. Both ovaries are removed along with the entire uterus. The surgical incision will be closed with several layers of sutures. Skin sutures will be placed, and these will be removed after 14 days.

**Are complications common with spaying?**

In general, complications are rare during spaying of cats. However, as with all anesthetic and surgical procedures, there is always a small risk. The potential complications include:

**Anesthetic reaction**

It is possible that any individual animal could have an adverse reaction following the administration of a drug or anesthetic. Such cases are impossible to predict, but are extremely rare. Pre-operative blood work is a useful screening test that may detect pre-existing problems which could interfere with the pet’s ability to handle the anesthetic drugs.

**It is important that you properly fast your cat prior to surgery according to your veterinarian's instructions. In addition, any signs of illness or previous medical conditions should be reported to your veterinarian prior to any sedation, anesthesia or surgery.**

**Internal bleeding**

This can occur if a ligature around a blood vessel breaks or slips off after the abdomen has been closed. This is very rare, and is more likely to occur if the cat is extremely active. Clinical signs include weakness, pale gums, depression, anorexia or a distended abdomen.

**Post-operative infection**

This may occur internally or externally around the incision site. In most cases the infection can be controlled with antibiotics. This most commonly occurs when the cat licks the site excessively or is in a damp environment.

**Sinus formation or Suture Reaction**

Although extremely rare, occasionally the body will react to certain types of suture material used during surgery. This results in a draining wound or tract that may appear up to several weeks after the surgery was performed. Often a further operation is required to remove the suture material.

**Will spaying have any affect on my cat?**

In the vast majority of cats, there are absolutely no adverse affects following spaying. 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.

There are many myths and rumors that are not supported by facts or research. Be sure to address any questions or concerns you may have with your veterinarian prior to surgery.
DECLAWING IN CATS

How is the declaw surgery performed?
Declawing (onychectomy) consists of surgical removal of the entire nail and nail bed of the front claws under general anesthesia. The surgeon may use a surgical instrument such as a scalpel to perform the procedure. The incision sites are closed using surgical skin adhesive or absorbable sutures. Your cat will be hospitalized for two nights. Expect that it will take about 2-6 weeks before the cat walks completely normally. The younger the cat, the quicker the recovery.

How should I take care of my cat after the surgery?
To ensure a safe and speedy recovery for your cat, follow these guidelines:

- **Litter Box**
  Replace the normal granular litter with shredded strips of paper or a specially formulated dust-free pelleted litter for the first five to seven days. If your pet refuses to use the paper litter, you may add one-quarter (¼) cup of regular clay litter that has been shaken to remove any clay dust. NEVER USE CLUMPING LITTER during this period. This is important because small granules of litter can enter or adhere to the surgical sites and cause an infection or delay healing.

- **Exercise**
  Restricting a cat’s activity is difficult, at best. As much as possible, discourage your cat from jumping on furniture and counter tops for the first week after surgery by blocking the access to these areas. If you see your cat on a counter top or high furniture, help it down. Cats primarily use their back legs to jump up, but may injure the surgical sites when they jump down and land on their front paws.

- **Bleeding**
  Occasionally a cat will break open one of its incisions and a few drops of blood may ooze out. The blood should clot rapidly and form a small scab. Notify the hospital if you observe continuous bleeding from a surgical site. Do not attempt to clean the paws or administer any topical medications without consulting a veterinarian.

Are there any negative aspects to declawing my cat?
After declawing, it is advisable to keep your cat indoors. Some 10 scientific studies have shown that declawed cats are not at greater risk of getting bitten or injured in a cat fight. However, they may have a decreased ability to defend themselves against other predators if allowed outdoors.

Under what circumstances should I contact my veterinarian?
You should contact the veterinary clinic if any of the following occur:

- Your cat’s feet appear very swollen or bleed frequently and profusely.
- Your pet is reluctant to walk after four to five (4-5) days at home.

There is a change in your cat’s general health, behavior or if your cat stops eating for two consecutive days.