

## Neutering Female Cats

Neutering a female cat involves the permanent surgical removal of the reproductive organs. There are many techniques employed. At Whiskers Vets, we perform an Ovariohysterectomy (OVH) – this includes the removal of both the ovaries and the uterus. In cats, this is often done via a flank incision (on the side of the body) as the incision is smaller and healing is often quicker. In some cases, we will decide to perform a midline incision (on the abdomen). This is often recommended if your cat is pregnant or if your cat is of a certain breed. Please book an appointment with one of our vets if you would like more information on which procedure will be best for your cat.

Before making the decision to have your cat neutered, it is important that you are informed of the main advantages and risks of neutering.

### Advantages

- Eliminates the risk of pregnancy so they can roam all year round worry-free!
- Eradicates unwanted oestrus behaviour
  - These can include excessive vocalisation and trying to escape/going missing.
- A reduced risk of developing mammary tumours
  - One study suggests it reduces the relative risk of developing mammary tumours by 24% if performed by 2 years of age.
  - 85% of mammary tumours in cats are malignant, so any reduction in the risk of developing mammary tumours is beneficial.
- Eliminates the risk of an infected uterus (pyometra).
  - This can be life-threatening.
  - The recommended treatment involves an emergency ovariohysterectomy (OVH), which requires anaesthetic in an already ill patient.

### Risks

- There is always a risk of adverse reactions with any general anaesthetic or surgery, which can include death, but this is very low. On the contrary, most recover remarkably well.
- Some specific risks of OVH include haemorrhage, abdominal infection, breakdown of the wound, suture material reactions, bruising, inflammation, and infection of the wound. Unfortunately, post-operative complications such as bruising, inflammation, and infection are much more likely in animals than humans undergoing the same procedure – our involvement to try to keep them calm and stop wound interference will go a long way to reduce these risks.
- There is an association with an increased tendency to gain weight (this can be controlled with dietary management discussed at the post-operation check). Whiskers Vets recommends that you book your cat in for a free weight assessment 2-3 months post-operatively.

### Age

Traditionally, male and female cats have often been neutered at six months of age, but this is after many cats reach sexual maturity and not based on any scientific rationale. For social, health, and population control reasons, it is now recommended neutering should routinely take place at around 4 months of age. We do, however, suggest waiting until your cat is at least 2kg in weight. This makes both the anaesthetic and medications used for the operation safer and the procedure more straightforward. Please feel free to book a pre-neuter nurse consultation if you wish to weigh and/or discuss this.

### Can you neuter a cat who is currently in season?

Yes. However, when a cat is in season, her reproductive system has a higher blood supply, and the tissue is more friable, making the surgery more risky. If you are able to keep her indoors away from other entire male cats, we would recommend waiting until she has finished her season before neutering.

### Can you neuter a cat who is pregnant?

Yes. If your cat is in early pregnancy, we can often perform neutering as normal via a flank incision. If your cat is over 3-4 weeks pregnant, we usually recommend a midline incision to make it easier to exteriorise the uterus. In some cases, we may feel that a pregnancy is too far along to consider neutering, but this can be discussed with a vet at your admission appointment.

### Pre-operative care

Please make sure your cat has not had any access to food after 8pm the previous evening; water can be left down until approximately 7.30am on the morning of the surgery. Please keep your cat in overnight to ensure they don't hunt/eat anything outside. Make sure to provide them with a litter tray to encourage them to go to the toilet before they come in. Try to keep your cat as clean as possible before bringing her in for the day as this will reduce the chance of infection. If your cat has any special dietary requirements, it is a good idea to bring her own food in for when she wakes up. If your cat gets especially stressed or has any behavioural issues, please notify us on the day so we can try to keep her as happy as possible during her stay with us.

### Whiskers Veterinary

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### **Admission for surgery**

On arrival at the surgery, you can expect to be seen by a vet or a veterinary nurse who will check that you understand the nature of the operation and will examine your cat to check she is well enough for the surgery. They will ask you to read and to sign a consent form for the procedure and ask you to supply contact phone numbers. Although we do not expect any trouble, it is very important that we can contact you for any emergencies during the day, so please keep a telephone at hand.

### **Post-operative care**

Cats generally recover quickly from the surgery.

Post-operative pain relief and two post-operative checks are included in the cost of the procedure. We usually don't place any external sutures, but it is still necessary for your cat to either wear a collar or a pet t-shirt to stop them licking the wound, as they may still pull out the sutures or cause inflammation and/or infection. Please discuss your preference between shirt and collar with your vet or vet nurse on the day of the procedure.

It is important to monitor your cat closely for 24 hours following the procedure. Some cats will require further monitoring depending on their individual reaction to the general anaesthetic/procedure. Please be aware of this when booking a date for her surgery.

You will be given a post-operation care sheet to guide you through this process, and you will be allocated a dedicated discharge slot in order to discuss this prior to taking her home. We recommend keeping your cat in for a minimum of 10 days post-surgery to allow her wound to heal completely.