

Do you have the balls to get him neutered?

- by Chris Taylor DVM

Its coming to that time of year, Christmas is getting closer and those cute little puppies and kittens that people got in the spring are growing up. This is the time when my office staff start making their reminder calls to our clients to remind them that its time to come in for the “the big chop” or the “little snip”. Understandably many people start to feel a little squeamish when they think of their beloved fluffy friend undergoing any kind of surgery, even routine stuff like spaying and neutering. Like a child that knows its time for bed but has many reasons why they should stay up a little longer, protest is strongest when we know that we need to do something that we just don’t want to. Believe me, we have heard ALL the arguments. Strangely, they seem to come more often from the male contingent of the family.... Just remind him “Honey, they’re not yours!”.

Neutering is the surgical sterilization of a male dog or cat by removal of the testicles, whereas spaying involves the removal of the ovaries and usually, the uterus, of female animals. The procedures are probably the single most common surgical procedures of your local veterinarian, and while complex they are performed so often that they have become routine and quite safe. The reasons include behavioral changes that un-spayed and un-neutered dogs experience. Spayed and neutered animals make better pets! They are less likely to wander, they bond more closely to you, they fight less, and are generally less aggressive to people. Their coats are usually nicer too. Perhaps you have some hesitation about getting this necessary procedure performed. “I just want my kids to see the miracle of birth” is one of the more common excuses we hear. I hope these same people will then round out their children’s education with a trip to the SPCA to witness the hundreds of animals that will be put to sleep every year for want of a good home. It breaks my heart.

Some people are afraid the procedure will make their pet fat. Sorry, no. Only you have that power! The lack in testosterone in older male dogs will cause them to have a lower metabolic rate, but if you feed them accordingly there is no reason for them to be fat. Inappropriate nutrition is the problem. Your pet needs a better diet, not an un-neuter!

One of my favourite but least common arguments comes from the Scandinavians where reportedly it is illegal to routinely spay or neuter pets as it interferes with their sexuality! Hard to argue with that, but when North Americans become even half as responsible pet owners as our Nordic friends, I’ll give it some consideration.

With the state of veterinary medicine in Canada, there exists a great deal of safety and a lot of good reasons to get your pet spayed or neutered. So go on and make the call! Modern veterinary anesthesia uses the same drugs and techniques to control pain during and after the procedure as available at your local human hospital. Its very quick, with most patients in and out of the office in a single day for a price than less than a dinner and movie for two. And no unwanted pregnancy!

