



Neutering my Tomcat



PETVET clinics are well-equipped, full-service, small animal veterinary practices providing comprehensive diagnostic, medical, surgical and dental care. We aim to offer quality service, giving your pet the maximum opportunity to lead a long and happy life.

ALL THE CARE YOUR PET NEEDS!



The intact male is likely to roam, fight, and spray and is of course, strongly attracted to seek out and mate with intact females. Tomcat urine is particularly odorous. Overall the intact male cat can make a most unpleasant household companion.

How does castration affect behaviour?

The only behaviours affected by castration are those under the influence of male hormones. A cat's temperament, training, and personality are the result of genetics and upbringing, and are generally unaffected by the presence or absence of male hormones. Castration is unlikely to calm an overactive cat or decrease aggression toward people. Castration will reduce some, but not all of the male behaviours. If performed prior to sexual maturity castration will help to prevent the development of secondary sexual characteristics such as penile barbs, large jowls and glands on the cat's tail.

What is neutering?

The operation involves general anaesthesia, and an incision is made over the scrotal sac so that each testicle can be excised. External sutures are not generally required. In some cats one or both testicles do not descend fully into the scrotum and may either remain in the abdomen or anywhere along the path to the scrotal sac. These cats are called cryptorchid and a more extensive surgery will be required to locate the testicles and remove them. If these testicles are not removed they will continue to produce hormones and the behaviour problems associated with intact male cats.

What are the benefits of neutering?

Population control

Many cats are destroyed across New Zealand each year because there are far more cats born than homes available. A single male cat can father many litters so that neutering of intact males is essential for population control. Although sexual desire will be greatly reduced by castration, some experienced males may continue to show sexual interest in females.

Spraying

The most common behaviour problem in cats of all ages is indoor elimination at locations other than the litter box. Many of these cats spray or mark walls and other vertical household objects. Neutering reduces or eliminates spraying in approximately 85% of male cats.

Aggression

Cats, whether neutered or intact, can get into fights but most inter-cat aggression is seen between intact males. These fights often lead to punctures that penetrate the skin and abscesses are a common sequel. Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (*Feline Aids*) is also spread by fighting. Tomcats provide a ready source of infection with this deadly virus. Neutering reduces fighting and abscess development in male cats.

Roaming and Sexual Attraction

Intact males have much larger territories and wander over much greater distances than females and neutered males. The urge to roam may be particularly strong during mating season. Castration reduces roaming in approximately 90% of cases. Neutering greatly reduces sexual interest.

Physical Changes

Male urine odour is particularly strong and pungent. Castration leads to a change to a more normal urine odour. After neutering intact males generally become much cleaner, less odorous, and better self-groomers. Abscess formation as a result of fighting is far less frequent and secondary sexual characteristics such as "stud tail" can be dramatically improved.



Does neutering lead to any adverse effects on health or behaviour?

There are many misconceptions about the effects of neutering on health and behaviour. Neutered males are no more likely to become fat or lazy provided they receive a proper diet and adequate exercise. With less roaming, fighting, mating, calorie intake may have to be reduced and alternative forms of play and activity provided.

Behaviours that have developed independent of hormonal influences such as hunting are not affected. Regardless of age at which it is performed, neutering does not have any effect on physical development, (*overall height and weight, urethral size*). Although neutering prior to puberty appears to have similar effects to neutering post-puberty, every attempt should be made to neuter prior to puberty before the cat develops new problems, experiences and habits.

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