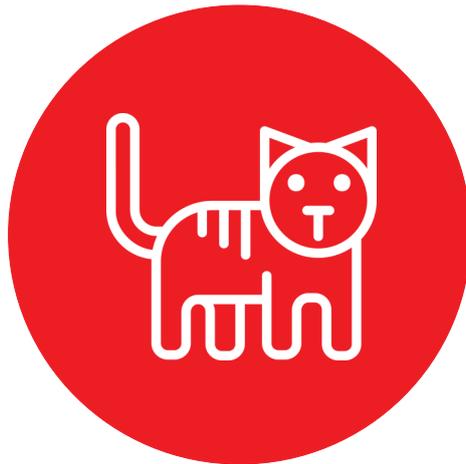




## Speying my Cat



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!



## Why Should I Have my Cat Speyed?

Reproductive behaviour in cats is quite different from most other species. As the female cat (Queen) approaches full adult size she will start her reproductive (Oestrus) cycle. This is usually at 6–9 months old but, in Spring, can commence as early as 5 months old. The heat period is known as 'Calling'. Calling usually lasts about a week and will be repeated every three weeks throughout the breeding season or until she mates. In New Zealand the breeding season commences in early Spring and continues until late Autumn. Oestrus cycles continue throughout the year in places with less seasonal variation in day length.

During calling the queen will show significant changes in her behaviour. She will actively try to go outside, she may persistently meow in a loud voice. When stroked she will arch her back, her tail will be held erect and the hair stand out, much like a bottle brush. She will roll around on the floor as if she is in pain. You may also notice an increase in nocturnal activity of other cats. Her scent and behaviour attract tomcats who will respond to her calls and may fight each other to earn the right to mate with her.

If the queen does not mate the cycle will continue every 3 weeks through out the breeding season. Queens are also very efficient at getting pregnant. They are 'induced ovulators'. Unlike most other species, ripe eggs are held in the ovaries and are only released once mating has occurred. Unless she has a fertility problem, mating will usually result in a pregnancy. Breeding efficiency does not end there. Once the kittens are weaned, about 3 months after mating, oestrus cycles will recommence. This means that cats can easily produce 2 – 3 litters of kittens each year. A queen may be fertile for 6 – 8 years.

The queens reproductive capacity, her frenetic reproductive behaviour and the detrimental environmental effects of unrestrained cat population growth are all very good reasons to have your female cat speyed.

Contraceptive drugs available for cats must be given year round and have a high risk of producing side effects. Side effects observed with these drugs include significant behavioural change, obesity, mammary gland swelling, lactation and diabetes. Entire females also have an increased risk of uterine infection (pyometra) and mammary tumours (breast cancer). Complications of contraception and the risk of these conditions are other good reasons to have your female cat speyed.

## Are There any Disadvantages with Speying?

As speying is a surgical procedure it cannot be reversed. Once speyed your cat will not be able to breed. Speyed cats will usually gain weight. The main reason for this will be reduced energy expenditure during frenetic reproductive behaviour. However, speying on its own will not result in obesity. Overfeeding is the main cause of excessive weight gain. In general there are very few disadvantages. Unlike dogs, the development of medical side effects of speying, such as urinary incontinence, is very rare.

## When Should I Have my Cat Speyed?

There is no medical reason for letting your cat have a litter before she is neutered. Psychologically this can be bad for the queen, and markedly increases the risk of mammary tumours later in life.

The cats unusual reproductive behaviour makes it desirable to spey before puberty. Animal welfare organisations encourage speying kittens at an early age. In general speying should be performed once your kitten is well established at home and has completed her kitten vaccination course. This will usually be at around 5 – 6 months old. It is possible to spey during early pregnancy but good planning should avoid the need for this.

## What does Speying Involve?

Surgery is performed under a general anaesthetic so the patient will need to be fasted overnight. Once asleep the abdominal cavity is opened through a small incision. The ovaries and the uterus are located, their blood vessels are tied and the organs removed. The incision in the abdominal wall and the skin is sutured closed. Most cats can return home on the day of surgery. Cats usually heal quickly and often the challenge is to restrain them sufficiently to allow complete healing without complications.



## What Surgical Complications could Arise?

Complications are vary rare during cat speys, however, as with all surgical procedures, there is always a small risk.

-  **Anaesthesia.** Some patients may react unexpectedly to their anaesthetic. Modern anaesthetic drugs are selected to minimise this risk. PETVET surgical staff have emergency equipment on hand and are trained to deal with anaesthetic emergencies.
-  **Surgery.** Bleeding may occur during surgery if a suture slips during placement. This is usually straightforward for the surgeon to resolve. Modern suture materials reduce the risk of sutures slipping after surgery.
-  **Post-operative Reactions** Some cats may react to the dissolving sutures used to close the incisions. More active cat may have larger reactions. As the suture material dissolves the reaction will usually resolve. If they lick wound excessively or tug at the sutures they can introduce infection or remove sutures before the wound has healed. In certain cats, notably Siamese, the hair that grows back over an operation site may be noticeably darker, due to a difference in the skin temperature. This darker patch will grow out as the hair is replaced.

If you have any questions about speying you can discuss them with your PETVET veterinarian.

### CLINIC LOCATIONS

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