



# Feline Forum

Courtesy of:

## Myths and Facts About Spaying

**MYTH: My cat will get fat and lazy.**

**FACT:** The truth is that most cats get fat and lazy because their owners feed them too much and don't give them enough exercise.

**MYTH: It's better to have one litter first.**

**FACT:** Medical evidence indicates just the opposite. In fact, the evidence shows that females spayed before their first heat are typically healthier. Many veterinarians now sterilize dogs and cats as young as eight weeks of age. Check with your veterinarian about the appropriate time for these procedures.

**MYTH: I don't want my male cat to feel like less of a male.**

**FACT:** Cats don't have any concept of sexual identity or ego. Neutering will not change a cat's basic personality. He doesn't suffer any kind of emotional reaction or identity crisis when neutered.

**MYTH: It's too expensive to have my cat spayed.**

**FACT:** The cost of spaying or neutering depends on the sex, size, and age of the cat, your veterinarian's fees, and a

number of other variables. But whatever the actual price, spay or neuter surgery is a one-time cost — a relatively small cost when compared to all the benefits. It's a bargain compared to the cost of having a litter and ensuring the health of the mother and litter; two months of pregnancy and another two months until the litter is weaned can add up to significant veterinary bills and food costs if complications develop. Most importantly, it's a very small price to pay for the health of your cat and the prevention of the births of more unwanted cats.

**MYTH: I'll find good homes for all the kittens.**

**FACT:** You may find homes for all of your cat's litter. But each home you find means one less home for the cats in shelters that need good homes. Also, in less than one year's time, each of your cat's offspring may have his or her own litter, adding even more animals to the population. The problem of pet overpopulation is created and perpetuated one litter at a time.

*Excerpted from a list provided by The Humane Society of the United States.*

## Cleaning up when your kitty messes up

To ensure your cat doesn't use the same area twice you must remove the odor from items that the cat sprayed or urinated on. Use an enzyme-based cleaner to deodorize the area. But never use ammonia because the smell reminds the cat of his own urine smell and tells him that's where he should go to eliminate.

## Coping With a Cat that Sprays

Cats spray (urinate straight back on a vertical surface, usually with tail held high and quivering) to mark new territory, to let other cats know they've been there, and to give an area its own special smell. Unneutered male cats tend to spray more than neutered males, and both more than female cats. Spraying is normal feline behavior — it's one of the ways they communicate.

Most pet cats are neutered and generally do not spray indoors. But when they do, it is usually a sign that they are feeling stressed or threatened by something such as a new cat, baby, or person in the house, or a change of routine.

After ruling out a medical cause, such as cystitis (inflammation of the bladder), and making sure what you're seeing and smelling is on a vertical surface rather than the floor, you can probably safely assume that your cat is spraying, and not just urinating outside the litter box. And if that's the case some behavior modification may be in order.

Don't hit or yell at your cat when he sprays. It will only make the problem worse. Instead, try to figure out why your cat is feeling insecure and take steps to ease the disruption. If you identify the problem or remove the source, try limiting the area your cat can roam in your house to improve his feeling of security.

As you work to resolve the problem, remain in consultation with your veterinarian. He or she will guide you through the process, and may recommend medication or refer you to specialist in feline behavior.

The information for *Feline Forum* has been prepared by the Cornell Feline Health Center, Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, Ithaca, NY. Copyright 2001



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