

Myths & Questions About Having Babies



► **By Richard Allen, DVM – Best Friends veterinarian**

Whenever we talk about reproduction, people tend to get anxious and uncomfortable. However, a lack of discussion about dog and cat reproduction has resulted in the needless deaths of millions of innocent dogs and cats.

My folks always said, “The truth will set you free.” In the case of our pets the truth will save millions of needless deaths if we can just accept and apply it.

We are responsible for the shelter, nutrition, *and* reproduction of our animal companions. And what may be true about human reproduction is not always true when applied to our pets.

Yet, some people remain completely uneducated about spay/neuter. And many otherwise smart folks are completely set in their misinformed opinions about letting their pets get pregnant.

We must totally separate our own human needs from those of our pets and put the myths about pet reproduction to rest.

Here are the three myths I seem to hear most:

Myth #1: My Pet is wonderful and special and I have lots of folks who want one of her/his babies.

All you have to do is look around to get the gist that genetics is the spin of a wheel. Even if you have a purebred, the pups and kittens you produce will not be a carbon of the looks or temperament of mom or dad.

Moreover, your pet is the reflection of YOU and is wonderful because YOU are wonderful. So, have all those folks who want to have wonderful pets go to the nearest shelter and get a pet and then let it reflect the wonderful person and home they provide.

Myth #2: I want My Pet to have pups/kittens so my children can see the miracle of birth.

Birth is indeed a miracle and so is life. Miracles surround us and blessings abound. Indeed births and passings are around us at every turn. Pets prefer to give birth in the quiet alone. If you watch, bother them, or interfere, the birth won't go smoothly. So, I doubt your kids will get to watch.

Use other examples of birth to teach your kids about the miracles all around us. The surgery to spay and neuter your pet is a miracle, too. It's a gift that I was given as a veterinarian and that I treasure to stop suffering and needless deaths.

Myth #3: I wouldn't let anybody do “that” (spay/neuter) to me and I won't let anybody do “that” to My Pet!

Every excuse for not having a spay/neuter done bothers me, but this one makes my left eye twitch.

When we imagine our pets to be little humans we truly insult them. Our pets aren't scared about the future or regretful of the past. They live each day as a new and wonderful experience. The surgery to fix them is relatively painless and they bounce back happy and healthy.

And here are three questions that I appreciate being asked:

Can a male dog sire a litter after being fixed?

Yes. A dog can still impregnate a female for up to two or three weeks after being neutered. Sperm is made in the testicle but requires 10 to 14 days to mature in a squiggly thing attached to the testicle called the epididymis. This maturing can happen anywhere along the vas deferens (the tube from the epididymis out). The vas deferens can't be removed so the young sperm that were there matured and became fertile.

Is it really safe to spay/neuter at a very early age? What is the youngest possible age?

I have never seen anything but good come from juvenile spay/neuter. It can be done as early as you can get them to the clinic. Youngsters heal fast!! They are strong and don't present difficult anesthetic risks. I've seen spay/neuter done at 4 weeks and the pups and kittens were allowed to nurse on mom an hour after surgery. I advise people to incorporate spay/neuter into their shot series at the second or third pup or kitten shot. I did my dog Zack at 7 weeks, the first day we met. He's lean, sleek, and active. He's sweet around other animals. No testosterone to make him snarly. He even likes my 8 year-old-cat, Nugget.

Does neutering really change the temperament of a dog?

When you let a male dog or cat come under the powerful influence of male hormone, they can quickly become a rambling, wandering, breeding machine.

After neutering, the drive to reproduce gradually diminishes and so the whole system and mindset begins to change.

This takes a while. So, when you adopt a wonderful, unneutered dog and have him fixed, be patient and give him some time on the sniffing, pacing, wanting-to-breed behavior.

If you adopt a puppy or kitten that isn't already spayed or neutered, schedule the spay or neuter today.

(And, of course, if you adopt a Best Friends puppy or kitten, they will already have been fixed – probably by Guess Who!) 🐾