

Early Age Sterilization of Companion Animals

Position:

The Edmonton Humane Society supports the early age (pediatric) spaying and neutering of dogs, cats and rabbits in the care of an animal shelter. This allows animal welfare organizations to prevent pet overpopulation and unplanned litters, by ensuring dogs, cats and rabbits are spayed or neutered before adoption.

Rationale

- EHS believes that pediatric sterilization is appropriate when the following qualifications are met:
 - The animal is of adequate age (7 to 16 weeks of age for cats, 8 to 16 weeks of age for dogs, 12 to 16 weeks of age (for rabbits).
 - The animal has reached sufficient weight (800g minimum for cats and 1kg minimum for rabbits);
 - The animal is clinically normal and healthy prior to surgery, at the discretion of a licensed veterinarian; and,
 - Proper surgical and evidence-based protocols specific to early aged animals are implemented.
- Several studies performed to evaluate the effects of early-age spaying or neutering suggest that the procedure is not associated with serious health problems and is medically sound. Early age spaying and neutering also has advantages such as safe anesthetic and surgical techniques, shorter surgical and recovery times, and avoidance of stress associated with spaying while in heat, pregnant, or with uterine disease. Industry standards recommend sterilization earlier than normal to decrease overpopulation of animals.
- The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) strongly supports neutering of all cats and dogs at animal shelters prior to adoption to prevent ongoing contributions to pet overpopulation.
- EHS believes that the health benefits (both at an individual and population-level) of pediatric sterilization significantly outweigh the risks. For owned animals, EHS encourages pet guardians to discuss the most appropriate age for sterilization with their veterinarian.

References

1. B.C Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (2009) Position Statement on Pediatric Sterilization. <https://spca.bc.ca/programs-services/leaders-in-our-field/position-statements/position-statement-on-pediatric-sterilization/>
2. Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (2019) Position Statement on Neutering of Dogs and Cats. <https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/neutering-of-dogs-and-cats-position-statement>
3. World Small Animal Veterinary Association Congress Proceedings (2017) Pediatric Neutering: Safe, Efficient, and Humane. <https://www.vin.com/apputil/content/defaultadv1.aspx?pld=20539&id=8506483>

4. Association of Shelter Veterinarians (2014) Position Statement on the Early-Age Spay-Neuter of Dogs and Cats. <https://www.sheltervet.org/assets/docs/position-statements/earlyagespayneuter.pdf>