

Neutering

cats.org.uk



There are many benefits to having cats neutered. We champion neutering as the only effective way to reduce the number of unwanted cats in the UK.

Cats are very effective breeders and can have several litters of kittens a year.



Overpopulation contributes to:

- more cats being unable to find homes
- more cats coming into rescue shelters
- the numbers of stray and feral cats increasing

When there are too many cats, they must live more closely with other cats than they would like. This can:

- increase infections
- increase stress-related disease
- cause conflict with other cats
- compromise their health and wellness

Neutering helps keep cats safe and happy.

What is neutering?

Neutering is the general term for the operation in all cats and includes spaying or castrating. It stops female cats from becoming pregnant and male cats from making females pregnant.

- A female cat is spayed. Her ovaries and part of the womb are removed
- A male cat is castrated. His testicles are removed

Female cats can get pregnant from as young as just four months old so we recommend that kittens are neutered at 16 weeks of age, although it's never too late to have your cat neutered.

Benefits of neutering

As well as helping to reduce the number of unwanted cats in the UK, there are also benefits to each cat who is neutered.

In females, spaying:

- prevents behaviours of being 'in season' or 'in heat' (when a female cat is fertile and can get pregnant) which can include calling, spraying pee and trying to escape or wandering further
- reduces the risk of womb infections
- reduces the risk of mammary cancer (which is over 90% less likely if cats are spayed before six months old)

- helps cats stay healthy: pregnancies can cause females to lose weight, be less healthy overall and be more vulnerable to disease
- prevents the worry of caring for a cat through pregnancy, birth and the additional responsibility of a litter of kittens

In males, castrating:

- reduces roaming and therefore the risk of getting lost, injured or killed in a road accident
- means they are less likely to fight with other cats. This helps prevent them catching and spreading infectious disease such as feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukaemia virus (FeLV)
- reduces the chance of scent marking by spraying pee
- often results in male cats to be in better condition and not have a strong smell

When a cat has a litter, there are extra things to consider such as:

- kittens can cost a lot to look after and need to have veterinary care
- there may be problems during the pregnancy and birth which risk the cat and her kittens, and may need urgent veterinary care

- it can be difficult to find homes for kittens
- there are already many cats being cared for by Cats Protection and other rescue organisations who need homes

The operation

Your cat will spend a day at the veterinary surgery and will be given a general anaesthetic. Keep them in the night before and set up a litter tray indoors if they don't already have one. Don't feed your cat in the hours leading up to the anaesthetic. Your vet will advise you when you should remove their food. The operation for both male and female cats is a common procedure. Usually you will be able to drop your cat off and pick them back up on the same day.

Afterwards, a female cat will have a small, shaved area on her side or belly. This fur will grow back in a few weeks. She will also have stitches and if these aren't dissolvable, they will be taken out by the vet around 10 days later.

Male cats may be shaved just under their tail and have two small surgical wounds where the testicles were removed. Stitches aren't used, and the wounds generally heal quickly.

Cats usually recover quickly and your vet will advise on the best care for your cat after the operation. This may include creating a quiet space for them to rest, keeping them indoors and giving pain relief medication. Check your cat's wound each day for redness, swelling or discharge. If you are worried, call your vet.

Once neutered your cat may need less food. This is because their body has less work to do. You will need to monitor your cat's weight. If you are concerned your cat may be gaining too much weight, talk to your vet.

Find out more: cats.org.uk/feeding

How much does it cost?

The cost of the operation varies according to where you live and between vet practices. Your vet will give you a quote before the operation takes place. Cats Protection offers financial assistance to those on benefits or low income in some cases.

Find out more: cats.org.uk/neutering or phone **03000 12 12 12**.

Find a vet to neuter your cat

Kittens can be safely neutered from four months old and this is what Cats Protection and the member charities of Cat-Kind recommend for pet cats. An increasing number of vets offer neutering from this age and you can find a veterinary practice near you on our website cats.org.uk/kitten-neutering

Did you know?

- Cats will breed with their brothers, sisters and parents
- Cats can start breeding from just four months of age
- It isn't beneficial for a cat to be in heat/season or to have a litter of kittens before being spayed
- A cat can have up to three litters a year with five or six kittens in each, adding up to 18 kittens a year. These kittens will then start breeding themselves from a young age
- It's possible to neuter a female cat when she is in heat/season or pregnant, although it's advisable to discuss this with your vet

Neutering has many benefits, both for the individual cat and the wider cat population.

Find out more: cats.org.uk/neutering

Looking for cat advice?

The following vet-approved guides are available as PDF downloads from [**cats.org.uk/information-leaflets**](https://cats.org.uk/information-leaflets)

Essential guides

- Caring for your cat W84001
- Welcome home W84002
- Moving home W84003
- Feeding and obesity W84004
- Keeping your cat safe W84005
- Neutering W84006
- When to let go W84007
- Microchipping W84008
- Understanding your cat's behaviour W84009
- Managing your cat's behaviour W84010
- Cats living together W84011
- Indoor and outdoor cats W84012
- Cats and people W84014
- Caring for your kitten W84015
- Elderly cats W84016
- Feral cats W84017
- Pregnant cats, birth and care of young kittens W84018

Veterinary guides

- Arthritis W83201
- Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) W83202
- Itchy cats and skin disorders W83204
- Kidney or renal disease W83206
- Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukaemia virus (FeLV) W83209
- Heart murmurs and heart disease W83211
- Hyperthyroidism W83212
- Teeth and oral health W83214
- Fleas and other parasites W83215
- Cat flu W83216
- Infectious disease and vaccination W83217
- Digestive disorders: vomiting and diarrhoea W83218

Please see [cats.org.uk](https://www.cats.org.uk) for more information on:

- Cats and the law
- Diabetes
- Feline parvovirus (FPV)
- Cats with disabilities
- Hypertension
- Feline coronavirus (FCoV) and feline infectious peritonitis (FIP)
- Feline asthma
- You and your vet
- Cats and pregnant women: toxoplasmosis

For more information about Cats Protection or to find out how you can support us, go to cats.org.uk



Cats Protection is a registered charity 203644 (England and Wales), SC037711 (Scotland) and is listed as a Section 167 institution by the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland.

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