



## FACTSHEET

### Desexing

#### **What age should a cat be desexed?**

For maximum health and social benefits, all kittens should be desexed before they reach sexual maturity (3 months). However, it is never too late to prevent unwanted kittens by desexing adult cats.

Kittens can be desexed from the age of eight weeks and we recommend that all cats be desexed by the age of three months. Early-age desexing prevents the development of antisocial behaviours associated with sexual maturity – such as spraying urine and wandering – as well as absolutely guaranteeing no unwanted kittens. Many people have been surprised to discover their five-month old 'kitten' is pregnant with her own kittens. If your vet is inexperienced in early-age desexing, or does not have the necessary equipment (small kittens require different anesthetic tools), CPS can refer you to a vet that practices early-age desexing.

**There is absolutely *no truth* to the old myth that female cats should be allowed to have one litter of kittens before being desexed.**

**Every year in NSW, tens of thousands of unwanted cats and kittens are euthanased. Don't contribute to this tragic statistic.**

#### **Why should I desex my male cat?**

Female cats need male cats to have kittens, so there is no question that both males and females should be desexed.

You should note that sexually mature 'entire' male cats are much more likely to exhibit unwanted behaviours such as spraying urine (including inside the house), wandering and getting into fights with other cats. They can also be more aggressive with people and are generally less affectionate than desexed males. Because of their behaviours, they are at higher risk of injury, being run over, and contracting diseases such as Feline AIDS and Feline Leukaemia Virus.

#### **My cats only live indoors. Why should they be desexed?**

There is still a risk of unwanted pregnancies: even indoor-only cats sometimes escape.

There are other reasons to desex, too. You don't want an undesexed male cat spraying his territory – your home. And an undesexed female 'in season' (or 'on heat') will call for a mate ... loudly and often. She will attract all the local undesexed males, who will mark their territory and fight.

Undesexed cats are at higher risk of cancer and other diseases of the reproductive organs.

Finally, by law all cats in NSW must be microchipped and registered with their local council. There is a substantial discount for the lifetime registration of desexed cats.

### **What are the risks of desexing?**

There are no known long-term risks associated with desexing.

There are some risks associated with anesthesia and the actual surgery, which your vet will explain to you. Generally, complications are very minimal or very rare.

### **What is the procedure?**

Female desexing (also called 'spaying') involves the surgical removal of the ovaries and uterus (through a small incision on the side or on the belly) while the cat is under general anaesthetic. After surgery, the cat will need to rest for a few hours and should be kept indoors and fairly quiet for the next few days. You should keep an eye on the incision scar and contact your vet if the scar appears to be swollen, weeping or bleeding. You will also need to know what type of stitches have been used and make sure your cat does not pull at them.

Male desexing (also called 'neutering') is also carried out under general anaesthetic and involves the removal of the testes through a small incision in the scrotum. There are no stitches. After surgery, the cat should be kept indoors and fairly quiet for a few days.

Most male and female cats and kittens recover very quickly from desexing but nonetheless you should observe them closely for a few days after surgery. Make sure there is plenty of fresh water to drink and offer them their favourite foods. If your cat appears listless and doesn't have their normal appetite back within 24 hours you should contact your vet.

The benefits of desexing kittens – preventing unwanted pregnancies; preventing antisocial behaviours; and reducing the risks of a number of diseases – far outweigh the risks.

**Do not add to the population of unwanted cats and kittens.**

**If you haven't desexed your cat, make an appointment with your vet today. There is no reason not to desex your cat!**