

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 (12-16 weeks/3-4 months). However, it is never too late to prevent unwanted kittens by desexing adult cats.

Kittens can be safely desexed from 8-10 weeks of age (by the time they weigh 1 kilogram). To qualify for the discount on registration, you need to desex your cat before they are 4 months old. Early-age desexing prevents the development of antisocial behaviours associated with sexual maturity – such as spraying urine (for both male and female cats) 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 we can refer you to a vet who is experienced in early-age desexing. A free professional education package on early age desexing is available for vets at www.catcare.org.au

There is absolutely *no truth* to the old myth that female cats should be allowed to have one litter of kittens before being desexed. In fact, having a litter increases their risk of cancer.

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

Early-age desexing is the only humane solution to feline overpopulation.

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. Undesexed (or ‘entire’) male cats are much more likely to exhibit unwanted behaviours such as spraying pungent-smelling 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 potentially fatal diseases such as Feline AIDS and Feline Leukaemia Virus. Desexing – in both male and female cats – also reduces the risk of many types of cancer of the reproductive organs.

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

Your cat will still come into season and then they will be desperate to get outside and find a mate. Their determination will mean there is a good chance they will be successful in escaping and mating.

Undesexed males will spray their territory (your home) with urine. Undesexed females will call for a mate ... loudly and often, attracting all the local undesexed males, mark their territory (with urine) and get into fights with both male and female cats.

By law, all cats in NSW must be microchipped and registered, and there is a substantial discount on lifetime registration for desexed cats.

Desexing makes cats healthier, happier, and less likely to wander; in short, desexed cats make better pets.

What are the risks of desexing?

There are no known long-term risks associated with desexing or early-age desexing. Early-age desexing has been standard procedure for shelters and rescue groups in Australia for some 20 years and has been found to be medically and behaviourally safe for cats. Early-age desexing does not change your cat's personality.

All procedures carry some risks associated with anesthesia and the actual surgery, which your vet will explain to you. Generally, complications are very minimal and very rare in healthy felines.

What is the procedure?

Female desexing (also called spaying/speying/ovariohysterectomy) involves the surgical removal of the ovaries and uterus through a small incision on the side [flank] or on the belly [midline] while the cat is under general anaesthetic. After surgery, the cat will need to rest 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 or castration) 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. Your vet will give you post-operative care instructions. Make sure your cat has plenty of fresh water to drink and offer them their favourite foods. Observe them closely and 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 – preventing unwanted pregnancy; preventing the development of antisocial behaviour; reducing the risk of numerous diseases – far outweigh the risks. **If you haven't desexed your cat, make an appointment with your vet today. There is no reason not to desex your cat!**

If you need assistance with discount cat desexing, please call us on 9519 7201. For more information, watch our video Early Age Desexing – Health and Welfare Benefits.

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