

## How spaying/neutering your animal will help to keep you away from the emergency room!



Surgical sterilisation is a generally accepted and recommended procedure in all domestic dogs and cats. The primary objective is to prevent reproduction and decrease the number of unwanted animals. Sadly, a disastrous number of animals are killed every year in Quebec, Canada and the world, because they are abandoned, homeless or simply unwanted. Animal shelters are filled with adorable animals, including puppies and kittens, which are looking for forever homes. Think of the stray cats' problem in Montreal that is completely out of control. You can do your part by spaying or neutering all your animals and by choosing adoption.

Du point de vue médical, les avantages de la stérilisation avant l'atteinte de la maturité sexuelle sont également nombreux. Les animaux non stérilisés auront tendance à vagabonder davantage et sont donc plus propices aux traumatismes et accidents: morsures de bagarres, accidents de voiture, chutes du 6<sup>e</sup> étage, etc. De plus, il a été démontré que la stérilisation avant les premières règles chez la chienne diminuait les chances de développer un cancer mammaire (du sein). Le comportement de l'animal sera également plus propice à la vie moderne, en diminuant le marquage urinaire chez le chat et les risques de morsures principalement venant de chiens mâles.



**New born kittens after a C-section**

In veterinary hospitals we sadly too often see two common but preventable severe medical conditions related to the intact female animal: dystocia (difficulty giving birth) and pyometra (infection of the uterus).

Many breeds are predisposed to delivery problems by the conformation of their heads, including Chihuahua, Bulldogs and other brachycephalic dogs (short nose). The problem may also occur if the baby is too big, which is often seen when a small breed dog has only one puppy.



The poor position of the baby may also be the cause for birthing problems in both dogs and cats. With dystocia, the babies' lives are at risk, but the mother may also become sick or even die, and a C-section is often required. Depending on the specific situation, an emergency surgery may be necessary and the costs involved will be much greater than the cost of an elective procedure at a young age. Sterilisation will often be recommended at the time of this surgery.

You should contact your veterinarian or go straight to the emergency veterinary hospital near you if you notice your pregnant dog: 1) having strong abdominal contractions for more than 20-30 minutes without producing a puppy; 2) has given birth to one or more puppy and more than 4-6 hours have passed without more puppies being born when you know or suspect more puppies to be in utero; 3) is not delivering babies 24 to 36 hours after her rectal temperature has dropped below 37.8 C (100 F); 4) seems painful, is crying, licking or biting her genitals during the delivery; 5) is not having visible strong contractions 8-12 hours after showing signs of preparation for the delivery; 6) has been pregnant for too long (you need to have precise due date); and finally 7) has a puppy stuck in the birth canal.



Clarinette Sauv , found under a balcony at a few days old.

Birth problems are rare in cats, but can certainly occur, for many reasons including for example an old hip fracture. Contrary to what is seen in dogs, cats may take prolonged pauses in between kitten or kittens without this being concerning, as long as there is no other source for concern.

A pyometra, or bacterial infection of the uterus, is sadly a much more common problem than often thought of. A recent study showed that up to about one in 4 intact female dogs will develop this condition. It can be a deadly condition if not treated promptly. Clinical signs will include lethargy, weakness, vomiting, loss of appetite, drinking too much, urinating more, fever, dehydration, shock, etc. Vaginal discharge will be noted in only about half of those cases.

Treatment recommendation will consist of an ovario-hysterectomy (surgical removal of the ovaries and uterus) after initial stabilisation with IV fluids and antibiotics. Once more, the cost and health consequences to the animal will be far greater than if the sterilisation had been done electively.

Many other medical conditions can occur only in unaltered animals including mastitis (infection of the mammary gland), eclampsia (low calcium after birth), certain prostatic problems, etc. One last consideration is that some dog breed may produce litter of more than 10 dogs! Do you have forever homes for all those little guys?!

**Talk today with your veterinarian about your options for spaying/neutering your animal!**