

Recently when I volunteered at the Northwoods Humane Society Thrift Shop, a customer was talking about her nearly-year-old dogs, and I asked if she'd had them spayed and neutered yet. She said, no, that she thought the female should have pups first to mellow out her mood and behavior. I instinctively cringed and urged her to neuter them (because I always have) then thought, to be fair, I ought to do some research.

So, the arguments for not spaying and neutering that I've heard are:

1. Let's let them grow up naturally and mature into their hormones and have babies.
2. It's too expensive.
3. It's an "indoor" dog or cat anyhow.

However, one of the first things I think we just must keep in mind is the fact that every extra litter of dogs or cats exacerbates the ongoing problems of strays, shelter crowding, and often euthanasia. In 2021-2023, some 359,000 dogs and 330,000 cats had to be euthanized in shelters across the United States. Some Scandinavian countries have no strays or overpopulation, but our problems are extreme.

Veterinarians generally agree that it is healthier for a young dog or cat (five to six months old) to be spayed or neutered earlier rather than later. It's really never too late, though. It can help with behavior problems, preventing urine spraying and aggression. The operation helps to prevent reproductive and urinary tract infections and breast cancer. It usually makes them less prone to straying, since they aren't drawn to those intriguing scents of the unaltered beasts, which keeps them out of fights, too.

So, what about the expense of the procedure and any dangers? Spaying and neutering are very common procedures; certainly discuss any medical concerns with your vet. Some European countries don't focus on it as much as the United States - or even forbid it! - but with our pet overpopulation problem, it's really the only responsible and loving way to go. The expense is far less than that of dealing with the other medical issues it prevents. Here in Hayward, costs average \$250-\$500.

However, if your family is low income or on a fixed income, the Northwoods Humane Society may be able to help you with that cost. To check it out, go online to their website [Northwoods Humane Society](#). At the top of the page, on the right, click on Community Outreach, then Spay/Neuter. Scroll down to the form and fill it out to request assistance. They will review it and let you know if you qualify.

And the final argument about the "indoor" dog or cat, well, the call of the wild can lead us all astray! And there we are with another litter of babies trying to find a home.

Please make the opportunity to spay or neuter your dog or cat, for the benefit of your pet, yourself, and your community!

And remember the fundraiser event for this cause, the Spay-getti and No Balls Dinner, April 27, 5:00 pm-7:30, at the Hayward Veterans Center.

Nancy Douglas