



THE CAT FANCIERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.

World's Largest Registry of Pedigreed Cats

CFA Promotes Spay & Neuter Programs

The existence of homeless cats is one of the major problems involving companion animals in the United States and around the world. The Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc. CFA has reaffirmed its commitment to reducing the number of cats euthanized in shelters. CFA promotes spay and neuter of cats kept as pets, who are not in a planned breeding program. It is also imperative to stop the reproduction of un-owned/free-roaming/feral cats in every community and to provide humane care for these cats. This message has been relayed by CFA and its participants to the general public for many years as part of responsible pet ownership education and concern for the well-being of all cats.

Surgical sterilization is currently the only foolproof and permanent method of birth control for cats. A spay is the surgical removal of the uterus and ovaries of a female animal. A female cat's risk of getting mammary cancer is reduced when she is spayed before her first heat cycle. Neutering is the surgical removal of the testicles of a male animal. Neutering a male cat generally prevents the development of undesirable behaviors such as spraying urine to mark territory and this stops the howling and roaming to find a mate. Male and female cats maintain better condition and make better pets when "altered" (another term for spay/neuter or sterilization).

Non-surgical sterilization is possible for the future. CFA is one of the Organizational Partners of the Alliance for Contraception in Cats and Dogs (ACC&D). This organization has the support of many animal welfare, veterinary, foundation, academic and animal health partners. ACC&D supports studies to develop new birth control methods, attract scientists to this area of research and to expedite the distribution of products that will help reduce populations of cats and dogs .

The Winn Feline Foundation, established by CFA in 1968, was instrumental in funding the initial studies in 1991 and 1992 to discover any negative effects of [early age spay/neuter](#) of young kittens. Early age sterilization has been determined to be safe and is endorsed by the American Humane Association, American Veterinary Medical Association, Spay USA, American Animal Hospital Association, CFA and numerous other animal organizations. CFA and others encourage early age spay/neuter for kittens adopted from shelters. This ensures that all kittens are altered prior to leaving the shelter, thus eliminating the need for contracts and follow up. There are valid reasons for pet owners and breeders of pedigreed kittens to decide on the optimum age for sterilization. Some kittens do not develop the robust physical characteristics of their breed if sterilized at a very young age. Others may not have a fully developed immune system until more mature. CFA believes it is important that surgery and timing should always be based on what is best for the individual kitten with advice from the pet owner's veterinarian.

Many states have laws requiring sterilization of all cats and dogs prior to adoption by shelters. We continue to support shelters and animal control agencies that alter cats prior to adoption. In areas where shelter sterilization prior to adoption is not possible, a shelter should require a written sterilization agreement. (The agreement should contain a deposit requirement and language requiring the owner to alter cats/kittens within 30 days of adoption or by their 4th-6th month estimated birth date.) There must be provisions for strict follow through and/or penalties with the above. Improvement in this area has had a great impact on reducing a major source of the shelter populations. We also encourage shelters to provide information and assistance with affordable spay/neuter.

Spay/neuter programs, which are free or low cost, high volume and high quality, are critical to reducing the millions of homeless cats. Neuter/spay programs generally are established by non-profit organizations. Many offer services only to those of low income. Some communities and shelters provide certificates or vouchers for a pet owner who can select a participating veterinarian. There are mobile spay/neuter providers especially in remote or rural areas or in cities to help those without transportation. Several states support spay/neuter programs through automobile license plates or other funding plans.

CFA has helped fund studies to determine pet owner attitudes regarding sterilization. It is clear that approximately 87% to over 90% of all cat owners in the United States have already altered their cats. However, cost is often a reason for procrastination. Based on surveys and statistics for cats relinquished to shelters, resources can be focused on zip codes with the highest need. In some areas this concept of targeted spay/neuter assistance is being tried.

Neuter/spay programs must be directed toward the main sources of cats or kittens who end up in shelters; un-owned/feral cats; unaltered cats that are allowed to roam and randomly mate; and, cats who are mated indiscriminately but purposefully (i.e. not a part of a recognized breeding program and with a profit motive).

Programs for feral cats are often set up as specialized clinics with sterilization provided by veterinarians experienced in handling unsocialized cats who work with groups of caregivers that organize trap/neuter/return (TNR). [CFA supports TNR](#) as the humane solution to feral cat reproduction. Stray/unowned/feral cats often gravitate to people's homes when pregnant. Providing an incentive to trap and spay a female once she has her litter so she does not go on to reproduce again usually means financial assistance for individuals. Regular weekly or monthly clinics, voucher plans with participating veterinarians, shelter spay/neuter days or special events to trap/neuter/return an entire feral colony are all examples of programs that are responsive to a variety of community needs.

Some pet owners do not realize their kitten can come in heat as young as 5 or 6 months of age. When they find a way outside they will become pregnant. Accidental litters can add to the shelter numbers when homes are not available for the offspring. Education is important to reach these cat owners to help them avoid an unwanted litter.

[CFA opposes mandated spay/neuter laws](#) including required sterilization of owned cats

reclaimed from a shelter on first impound. There is always the chance that a valuable pedigreed cat might get outside due to emergency, disasters or accidents. The

American College of Theriogenologists (ACT) and the Society for Theriogenology (SFT) issued a formal position against mandatory spay/neuter (MSN) laws. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has a formal policy that they do not support MSN laws targeting non shelter cats and dogs. Alley Cat Allies opposes MSN as targeting the wrong cats. The American Humane Association states that: "While American Humane supports mandatory spay/neuter of all shelter and rescue animals prior to adoption, we believe in general that expenses associated with mandatory spay/neuter legislation would be better spent on low- or no-cost spay/neuter programs."

Conscientious breeders of pedigreed cats take all appropriate steps to ensure that animals placed by them, not specifically intended to be used in a recognized breeding program, are altered before any opportunity to mate. CFA registration forms allow for a "not for breeding" check mark so no offspring can be registered when indicated by the breeder. Pet stores, rescue groups and any others who place cats should also ensure similar sterilization achievement when appropriate.

Pedigreed cat breeders have used sterilization contracts and follow up for at least 40 years with a high rate of success measured by the very few pedigreed cats ever found in shelters. Many breeders today prefer early-age sterilization for their kittens prior to placement. CFA has a mentoring program for new breeders and an animal welfare program to educate and assist whenever a pedigreed cat needs to be re-homed so that these cats will not enter the shelters.

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