

# Neutering your female cat



Cat's reproductive systems ensure they can have three litters in a year, with an average of 5 kittens per litter. These kittens can then start to reproduce at 5 months of age!

Once an un-neutered female cat reaches puberty she will "call" when in "heat". This can be for a week at a time every 2-3 weeks until she is mated. She may also (much to the alarm of her owner) cry loudly while rolling on the floor. This behaviour combined with her scent will attract tom cats from miles around.

## The jargon

Neutering is the general term used to describe the removal of a pet's reproductive organs.

Spaying or ovario-hysterectomy is the surgical removal of a female animal's ovaries and uterus (womb).

## The benefits of spaying

Un-neutered (entire) cats are 7 times more likely to develop mammary cancer than those spayed at puberty.

Mammary cancer is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most common form of feline cancer with 80% of mammary tumours being malignant.

The risk of pyometra (womb infection) is eradicated.

## When to spay?

The surgical veterinary team at UCD recommends that female cats should be neutered at 4-5 months of age.

## **Are there any disadvantages?**

Neutered cats may gain weight but if you follow the food reduction advice (provided after neutering by your local veterinary hospital), this should not be a problem.

## **What will it cost to spay my cat?**

Please contact your local veterinary practice for a quote.

## **Common myths**

*"It is best to let a queen have a litter before spaying"*

Allowing a cat to produce a litter has NO health benefits. There are only health risks to the mother during the pregnancy and when giving birth. Irish shelters are literally over-run with cats and kittens so finding good homes for kittens will not be easy!

*"My cat is weaning kittens, she can't get pregnant"*

Your cat can become pregnant again when her kittens are two weeks old!

*"My cat's too young to get pregnant"*

Cats can become pregnant from 5 months of age!

*"Neutering is cruel and un-natural"*

Although nobody wants their pet to undergo an operation, it is necessary to prevent adding to Ireland's **huge** unwanted cat population. There are also the health benefits to consider!

Source: [www.spayweekireland.ie](http://www.spayweekireland.ie) & [www.feralcatsireland.org](http://www.feralcatsireland.org)