

Family planning for your cat

Unless you wish to breed from him/her, our advice is always to have your cat neutered at an early age, before he/she becomes sexually active.

This procedure has many benefits:

- Preventing unplanned, unwanted and costly offspring
- Eliminating specific types of cancer and diseases
- Reducing aggression, straying, spraying and other anti-social behaviour

Although surgery is involved, most patients recover so quickly that they stay with us for only a few hours, and are ready to go home after a light lunch. We recommend that they are kept indoors that night, but the majority are ready to resume normal exercise the following day.

Female cats (queens)

Females generally reach sexual maturity around 6 - 8 months of age. During spring and autumn, an entire queen (ie a female who has not been neutered) will be receptive to mating - a state known as 'calling' or 'being on heat'. In between these times there is no female sexual activity.

Calling: The cat will be restless, very vocal, show unusual affection, arch her back and raise her tail whilst treading with the rear paws, or even throw herself to the floor and writhe on her back. She will also make desperate attempts to escape confinement to search for a male cat. If mating is prevented, this behaviour will last about 10 days, then be followed by a rest of 5 - 6 days before calling is resumed. This cycle will be repeated several times through the season.



Post-calling: If mated, calling comes to an abrupt end until the kittens are born 2 months later. If kitting occurs at a sexually active time of the year, the queen may begin calling again very soon afterwards, and is able to become pregnant once more when the first kittens are only a few weeks old.

Although fertility will decrease with age, pregnancy is possible throughout life, so we recommend neutering your cat unless you are planning to breed from her.

Temporary 'family planning' calls for a hormone injection repeated as needed. However, a common side effect of hormone treatments is that long term use may result in an infected uterus (pyometra).

The permanent option is a spay, to remove the uterus and ovaries, and this is best done either at 5-6 months of age or out of breeding seasons.

Male cats (toms)

Males generally reach sexual maturity from around 6 months old. An adult tom will spend a large part of his time seeking out calling females, often roaming extensively and fighting with other suitors along the way. In addition, he will spray urine to delineate his territory, which may include your neighbour's property as well as your own, inside and out, and the very pungent odour is almost impossible to eradicate.

As a result, entire male cats do not make good pets. Their attention is directed elsewhere, and, particularly during spring and autumn, little time will be spent at home.

Treatment may be needed for fight wounds and resulting abscesses and there is a real risk of picking up Leukaemia or Aids - two feline viral diseases spread in saliva via bites. In order to deal with these potential problems, we suggest that any male cat not required for breeding is castrated between the ages of 5 and 9 months. The younger the cat, the more successful the suppression of undesirable sex-related behaviour.

For more information about the neutering process, or to make an appointment for your cat, please contact the reception team on 01435 864422

