

Elburn Animal Hospital Newsletter

March, 2011

Welcome

The month of March is traditionally the month we discuss spaying and neutering our pets. Newsletters in the past have included information on the many benefits of having your pet sexually altered (March 2010), and general information (March 2009). You can read these in our "Special Interest" section on our website, www.elburnanimalhospital.com. This month we are letting our clients in on what, exactly, happens during a neuter or spay. From start to finish, you'll learn about the two procedures. Our featured employee this month is Vanessa, and we'll learn a bit more about her and her pets. Also we will get to know Rio, our interesting case of the month. Lastly, don't forget to check out the TAILS featured pets. Who knows if your next fur baby might be found here? Any questions can be addressed to a member of our staff at (630) 365-9599, or you can contact us via email at 3lburn@sbcglobal.net.

March: Spay and Neuter Month

I believe we all understand why spaying and neutering our companion animals is not just a healthy procedure, but also a *necessary* one. The relief from pet overpopulation alone is an important enough reason to have these surgeries performed, not to mention the physical and psychological benefits to each individual pet. Still, when a client brings their pet to us for one of these surgeries, they quite often express anxiety over what is going to happen, how long their pet will be under anesthesia, and how we safeguard against complications which may become life-threatening. Here we will explain our procedures and answer your questions.

Pre-Surgical Exam

To understand our procedure for spaying and neutering we look first to our pre-surgical exam appoint. This is an appointment scheduled between two days and four weeks before the surgery is scheduled. Dr Cechner performs a complete physical exam to note any potential problems, which we then address with the client. She listens to the heart and lungs, palpates the abdomen to detect any organ abnormalities, checks the ears and teeth, and examines the eyes for evidence of neurological

and sight health. At this time we also draw blood to send to our laboratory for analysis.

There are several blood panels available for the doctor to choose. The first is our standard pre-surgical panel. It is used for healthy cats or in cases where a heartworm test was already performed (in healthy dogs). The next panel is our Canine Wellness panel. It gives us a few more chemistry results, plus a heartworm test. Both of these panels give a general look at the health of the kidneys, liver, red and white blood cells, and platelets. If the doctor deems necessary, a full chemistry panel or Senior chemistry panel may be performed on either dogs or cats. While more expensive, these tests give us much more information, including pancreatic function and electrolytes (which help us gauge the health of the heart and kidneys even better). The Senior chemistry panel also tells us about thyroid function, an important organ that helps control our pets' metabolic processes. Dr Cechner requires at least a pre-surgical panel, but if a patient is at a higher risk due to age or size she recommends a more informative chemistry panel. Results from all these panels (except the Senior panel) are usually returned to us within two days; the Senior panel is usually returned within 3 days.

The Morning of Surgery

The day of your pet's surgery they need to be fasted for 12 hours before they are brought to us. We ask that your pet not be fed after 8:00pm the previous night, although water is OK to keep available until early morning (i.e., 6:00a.m.) on the date of the procedure. When you drop your pet off at our office, we ask that you sign two papers: one is general information and surgical release form, and the other is acknowledgement of bloodwork performed as well as optional procedures you wish us to perform. These optional procedures include everything from a nail trim to an IV catheter, and prices are listed for each service you desire. We also need a phone number to contact a family member who is authorized to make decisions regarding care of your pet—and who will answer when we call! Oftentimes we call just to check in or ask a quick question, but if we have a question we need to discuss with you while your pet is under anesthesia (such as 'Can we remove the baby tooth that hasn't fallen out yet?') it is very important that we be able to reach you as quickly as possible.

Once we've checked your pet in and (s)he is

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comfortable in one of our kennels, (s)he gets to hang out with us during the morning. We observe our surgical patients while the doctor sees patients for the first few hours of our day. This gives our surgical patients time to calm down (yes, they calm down!), and we get to see how they are acting that morning. If something seems odd about the behavior, such as needing to go outside to urinate every hour, we will call the client. We also want to make sure our surgery patients don't feel nauseous and haven't eaten since the evening before. Don't worry; we don't make them wait as long as human surgery patients sometimes have to!

Surgical Prep

Before we begin any surgical procedure, the patient is walked outside one last time to eliminate. When we are ready to begin, we first give the patient a sedative injection. This injection, given into a vein, relaxes the pet so we can prepare him or her for surgery. Next we insert a flexible tube into the trachea. This is called intubation. This procedure keeps the pet safe from aspirating (inhaling) any liquid while it is under anesthesia, and allows us to control the amount of general anesthesia being delivered. After a minute or two of inhaling the general anesthesia (we use Isoflurane, one of the safest inhalants in veterinary medicine), the pet is completely anesthetized.



Intubation (Sierra)

At this point we secure the patient's limbs to the surgical table to hold the body steady during surgery. We also attach all of our leads for monitoring vital functions. Each pet is monitored for heart rate, breathing rate, and core temperature. We also routinely monitor an ECG for heart function, blood pressure, and the percent of oxygen in the blood (perfusion). Our technicians are trained not just to watch the computer screen, but to watch the patient to make sure the breaths are deep and even, and the heart rate is steady and strong. We use the least



Prepping before surgery (Sierra)

amount of anesthesia gas as we can to make the procedure as safe as possible and allow our patients to wake up easily and quickly after the surgery is finished.



Spay incisions do not bleed much (Sierra)

The procedures for a spay and a neuter are the same up to this point, but here they diverge. First we will list what happens during a neuter, then we will discuss the spay procedure.

Neuter Procedure

The neuter procedure is properly called a castration. The two testicles are removed to prevent impregnation of females and testicular cancer, and to curb hormonal behaviors. In this surgery, the abdominal area in front of the pet's scrotum is shaved (the testicles themselves are plucked in cats) so no hair remains to contaminate the incision site. We use three solutions to scrub the area prior to the doctor beginning the procedure. Dr Cechner scrubs in while the technicians are prepping the patient. She gets her mask, hairnet, sterile gloves and gown on. When she is done, a tech ties her gown, because doctors are not allowed to touch anything non-sterile between scrubbing and beginning the surgery.



Dr C gowning up



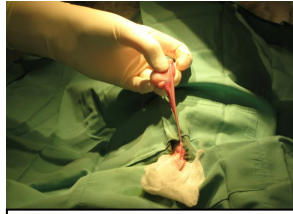
One canine testicle

For a dog castration, one incision is made in front of the scrotum. It is made here to reduce the irritation to the scrotum once the testicles are gone. The doctor exposes a testicle, ligates (ties off) the blood vessels connected to the organ, severs the testicle from the body, checks for bleeding, and sutures the incision. Then she repeats this for the second testicle. There are two layers (the subcutaneous and subcuticular) of suture used. During a cat neuter, the doctor

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makes two incisions—one for each testicle—directly into the scrotum. The testicles are removed from the scrotum and a “self-tie” is performed, where the spermatic cord is wrapped on itself. The incisions are left open to heal, because they are very small.



Preparing to ligate

Spay Procedure

The medical term for spaying a female is ovariectomy. In this procedure the doctor removes the ovaries and the uterus. This prevents pregnancy as well as uterine cancer, and reduces the incidence of mammary gland tumors as well as hormone-related behaviors. To spay a female the entire abdomen must be shaved. The same three



Using a spay hook (Sierra)

solutions are used to clean the skin so no infectious material can enter through the incision site. After Dr Cechner has her gown and other sterile supplies, she makes an incision in the abdomen. She uses a special instrument called a “spay hook” to reach into the abdomen and withdraw the uterus with its attached ovaries. Dogs and cats have a uterus with two discrete parts, or “horns,” so each horn is ligated (tied off) separately. Once both uterine horns have been ligated and disconnected from the body, Dr Cechner double-ligates the uterine stump. Then Dr Cechner sutures the abdomen closed. There are several layers that must be sutured for a spay—the muscular/fascial layer, the subcutaneous layer (under the skin), and the subcuticular layer (skin).



First layer of sutures (Sierra)

Recovery

Recovery is the same for both an ovariectomy and a castration. After the doctor finishes suturing

and the surgical drape and instruments are taken away, the technicians clean the incision areas, and the patient is taken off of isoflurane and allowed to breathe simple oxygen for a few minutes. Once the pet begins swallowing, but before (s)he is aware of the surroundings, the tracheal tube is removed. (S)He is returned to a kennel where a tech continues to monitor by hand while the patient wakes up. This often calms the pet to make the transition to wakefulness easier. Sometimes our patients attempt to stand within the next hour, but more often it takes several hours for them to try to get up.



Sutured spay incision (Sierra)

During their recovery period, they are allowed to



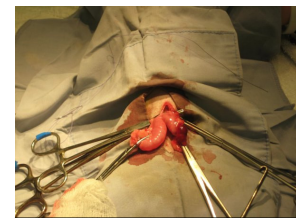
Anders sitting with Sierra

rest with little interference. So long as the pet doesn't start licking the incision site(s), they are monitored from outside the kennel. After a few hours, the patient is gently encouraged to stand

and slowly walk. Dogs are taken outside if they are capable of walking for a few minutes; cats are encouraged to walk inside the clinic. Pet owners are asked to call the office between 5:00 and 6:00pm, at which time each patient has been evaluated for discharge. Depending on how each individual is waking up, the pet may be ready to go home at that time.

Home Care

A letter detailing instructions for home care is sent home as each pet is discharged. The first night home, pet owners may notice their pet is very sleepy and may not want to eat or drink. This is normal; nausea is a common side effect of anesthesia. The pet should be eating and



Infected uterine horns in a Chihuahua

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drinking as usual by the following morning. Since the pet has not had anything pass through its digestive system for up to a full 24 hours, no bowel movement for up to 36 hours post-surgery is also a normal occurrence. Pain medication is highly recommended for both of these procedures, although an injection may be given in the clinic before the pet wakes up the afternoon of the surgery if the client elects to have this done.

One of the most important parts of home care following a spay or neuter is keeping the pet on restricted



Dehiscence following a castration (not Dr C's patient!)

activity. Do not let your pet run, jump or climb stairs for a full 14 days post-operation.

This means no jumping on or off furniture (yes, cat

lovers!) and no letting your pet outside to urinate without being on a leash. This is important for several reasons. First, the more the tissue is stretched during movement, the longer it will take to heal. Also, if there is enough movement the sutures may become loose, increasing the risk of infection as microbes are able to get directly into the tissue below the skin. Lastly, the sutures we use are absorbable and so break down with time. If the pet is not allowed to heal properly during the first couple of weeks after the operation, the suture material becomes less strong and may lead to a serious complication called dehiscence. This is when the incision line breaks down—intestine can actually come out of the body if this condition becomes severe enough. Please keep them quiet!



An infected scrotal incision (also not Dr C's patient!)

Did you know that not only cats and dogs can be spayed or neutered? Some other "exotic" pets that are routinely sexually altered include ferrets (every



A spayed rat (not done by Dr C. though)

one sold in pet stores has already been fixed), rabbits, and even guinea pigs. Other animals can also be altered, although it's not performed as routinely. Reptiles, rats, hamsters, and even birds can be spayed and neutered. Having

these surgeries often has the same benefits in the "exotic" pets as seen in dogs and cats. The hormonal changes are not as noticeable so behavioral issues are not as common in altered pets. The incidence of certain types of cancer is also reduced—by as much as 85% in some types. So even our "pocket pets" can benefit from being spayed or neutered.

We all know having our pets spayed and neutered is necessary to their health. Now we also know what exactly happens during these procedures. Please remember that, although there is always a health risk whenever a pet (or person) undergoes a procedure that requires anesthetic, spaying and neutering are highly routine surgeries. Shelters often perform these on pets as young as 8 weeks' of age due to the issue of non-compliance by adoptive families. Here we advocate waiting until the pet has reached full stature, but before they enter sexual maturity. For most pets, this age occurs sometime between 6 and 9 months. By the by, the dog pictured in the photo series above, Sierra, lost less than one teaspoon of blood during the entire procedure. She was a perfectly routine spay! ☺

Meet Our Staff: Vanessa

This month our featured employee is Vanessa. She's been working for the clinic since 2001. For several years now she's been here part time only, as she works as an Direct Ship Invoicing Specialist full time. Vanessa is a single mother—her daughter attends all our staff meetings and



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helps out by visiting any hospitalized pets while she's here. Together they care for their dogs Chewy and Lilly, their cat Tony, Thomas the Sulcata Tortoise, and Pookie the cockatoo. Vanessa enjoys spending time with her daughter as much as possible. They like to go roller skating and visit petting zoos. Her daughter is also learning to ride a horse! Vanessa has many close friends and she likes to attend comedy clubs with them. She is also very close with her family and spends time with them whenever she can. She's very knowledgeable about companion animals and is an accomplished technician. Thanks, Vanessa, for being part of the Elburn Animal Hospital family!



Darlene Adams, office manager

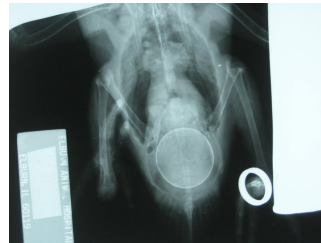
Feature: Spotlighting Our Patients

Each month our staff collaborates to present photos and a brief summary of an interesting or touching case we've seen the previous month. We want to showcase the diversity in patients we see and let you know a little more about our daily activities at Elburn Animal Hospital.

This month we're showcasing a bird named Rio. Rio is a Buffon Macaw owned by sisters Donna and Char Chipp. Up until February, everyone thought Rio was a male. Then "he" started making strange noises while defecating and the sisters brought him here. Dr Cechner suggested taking an x-ray and lo and behold! Rio was a girl. But not just any girl—she was egg-bound. This means that Rio's



body could not push out the unfertilized egg properly. Without treatment, Rio would die. Dr Cechner collapsed the egg inside Rio's



body in the hopes that this would help her push it out, but no such luck. She was hospitalized here for a few days, during which

time she had to receive several injections a day as well be fed through a tube. By the fourth day, Rio was fighting back and squawking at us—always a good sign! She still needs regular monitoring, but she's now eating on her own and acting more normally. Dr

Cechner is hopeful that the egg may be passed, or Rio's body may reabsorb it. If she begins exhibiting signs of a problem again, she may have to be spayed!



TAILS Featured Pets:

This month the featured pets from TAILS Humane Society are those kitties in the New Beginnings Program. Following is a description of the program, and some of the cats that are at TAILS, waiting for their new forever home.

A New Beginning

In spite of all the love and attention the cats here at TAILS receive, nothing can replace the consistency, the sense of belonging, and the bond that comes from being part of a family. There are so many homeless adult cats here at TAILS to choose from, that the quieter, more reserved cats often get overlooked and stay in the shelter for longer than their more outgoing shelter mates.

TAILS has selected a few cats who need *A New Beginning*. Their adoption fee is waived. *A New Beginning* tag will be attached to their cage cards at TAILS. Please ask the staff about these dear cats.

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Some of these cats may have been at TAILS for an extended period of time. Many are passed by simply because they do not command attention. They may be plainer in appearance, more polite and less apt to reach out and grab a visitor. But in their hearts, they are hoping you'll choose to adopt them. Please visit them today and give them the New Beginning they need.

ALI

3-years, male, medium size, all paws declawed, lives in Kitty Kondo

I'm a very sensitive, gentle boy looking for a lap to snuggle on and a kind owner or low key family to spend my days with. I get along well with appropriate dogs and cat savvy kids. I'm very affectionate and mellow but get stressed when there are large groups of people over or lots of changes so I hope I can find someone consistent and understanding to my gentle nature. Come and visit me, today!



SPUNKY

2-years old, female, medium size, living in Kitty Kondos

Looking for a little pistol who will also be your lap-cat and best friend for life? Then come and visit this extraordinary, entertaining and playful little lady! Spunky's been dealt a hard blow in life, Epilepsy. But would



you believe it if I said staff at TAILS actually LOOKS FORWARD TO GIVING A CAT MEDS?!? Through clicker training and a lot of kind volunteers building trust with Spunky, she now sashays and kneads at the front door of her cage to get her meds and either a good petting or a tasty treat to follow. Due to her delighted response to receiving her daily Epilepsy medication, she's the highlight of many folks' days at TAILS! Come meet this truly spunky cat, seeking a true bond with a loving owner and a little playtime, each day.

ROSY

5-years, female, medium size, living in Witzie's Room



I'm an amazingly sweet and gentle cat looking for a loving owner to snuggle. I came from a very harsh situation but have blossomed into a very affectionate and brave kitty. I no longer hide or back away from people and now know I can seek out their attention and trust them to care for me. I get along well with other cats but would probably do well with a house that has minimal hustle and bustle so I can continue to gain confidence and a more outgoing nature.

TRILLIAN

1-year, female, medium size, living in Witzie's Room



Trillian was just a tiny kitten when she was left at another shelter in March, 2009. After TAILS rescued her, she lived in a foster home and was extremely fearful of the big world. A TAILS supervisor will explain how to gradually acclimate her to your home if she's the kitty for you. She's never known what a real home is.

PAULETTE

6-months old, female, medium size, living in Witzie's Room



I've always seemed a bit of a wall flower but rumor has it these are just learned behaviors. Sure, when I see new people I run and hide and look like I'll be under the bed indefinitely in my new home, but take a second look and see that my ears aren't back, my muscles are relaxed, and my pupils aren't dilated...hmmm. Lean in and give me a good, slow petting under the chin and I lean in, then...I start purring! I also love to chase my little toy mouse and LOVE to play, unless someone

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notices, then I reel in my friskiness a bit. Since I was brought in with a bunch of semi-feral cats as an itty bitty kitten, the theory is that this is the only way I know how to behave, contrary to what I really want, which is to be loved and to play! Give me a calm home, a whole lot of love and patience, and see what an amazing cat I can blossom into!

SONATA

1-year, female, medium size, living in Witzie's Room

I'm a bit scared of the world but I've got big plans for the future. I'm going to find the family of my dreams and learn through their patience and love how not to startle with loud noises, hide from new people and shy away from adventure (this is where you come in). TAILS

will support them with training, socializing, and behavioral assistance, along the way and I have great potential to be the laid back,



loving cat of their dreams. I would do best with older kids or a non-chaotic environment, but I get along very well with other cats and haven't been around dogs so as long as they're appropriate and the intro's gradual I should get along. Come and get to know me, I'm here all day! For more info, e-mail Sam, cat behavior department, at SLenser@TAILSHumaneSociety.org

SELENA

5-years, female, small size, living in Kitty Kondos



sweetheart who does like to be brushed.

Selena was brought to TAILS by a new home owner who said that every time the door was opened, Selena would run inside. When she is stressed, Selena doesn't eat well. She would like a quiet home and given gentle attention. She's a

MAY

3-years, female, medium size, living in the lobby

I thought that May might be my lucky month and it was-I was rescued from a bad situation, I got over some scary medical issues and I got to be available for adoption. Here's where you come in-take me home! I've been through too much not to be at the end of the rainbow. I've become a favorite kitty to many of the staff members thanks to my sweet nature and my unwavering spirit. Visit with me and see for yourself!



If you have any questions or concerns, or would like more information, visit our website at www.elburnanimalhospital.com, or give us a call at (630) 365-9599. If you would like to opt out of receiving our newsletter, please send an email to us at 3lburn@sbcglobal.net.

March Special: Surgical patients (of any type) will receive 50% off of a 24PetWatch microchip. A \$22 savings! Make sure you mention this ad to get the discount! ☺

Upcoming Event: Behavior Training Class:

Please see below for information regarding behavior training and classes given by Susan Brown. These classes focus on helping owners understand the way the companion animal brain works, and how to communicate effectively while creating opportunities in which your pet can succeed, thus strengthening his or her confidence and eagerness to continue learning. Classes are open to individuals and discounts are available for those who work or volunteer in the animal care field.

PRINCIPALS OF LEARNING AND BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION IN ANIMALS (For All Species)

This is the core course that will form the foundation for all other courses and workshops on training. This course will help you develop an understanding of how animals learn and through this information

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then help you solve behavioral problems as well as preventing future problems.

This course is often the only one many people need to solve common behavioral problems and develop the relationship they always wanted with their pet.

Next Scheduled Class:

Date: March 6, 13 and 27, 2011

Time: 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Location: Arboretum View Animal Hospital
2551 Warrenville Road

Downers Grove, IL 60515

Directions:

<http://www.avah.org/about/directions/>

Upcoming Event: Go Fetch! Homeless Pet Food Drive:

Drive:

This May it will be time for the annual Nationwide "Go Fetch" food drive for homeless animals. This drive is highlighted each year for the entire month of May. Events are held at shelters, veterinary clinics, schools and other places to collect food, bedding supplies, identification supplies and other items necessary to keeping pets healthy and happy, then donated to organizations dedicated to helping the animals left destitute to brave the elements on the streets, those in animal shelters, animals of low-income families, those of neglect and abuse, and animals with human companions in homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and at food banks and pantries.

Do you have an idea for a newsletter? A question you'd like answered about caring for your pet? Email us at 3lburn@sbcglobal.net and let us know! We are always interested in what you have to say, and what you want to know.