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## Current Headlines in Evergreen

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### Ask the Animal Behaviorist

#### July is Spay/Neuter Month for cats at Humane Society Silicon Valley

By Maureen Strenfel

*Animal Behaviorist, Humane Society Silicon Valley*

Humane Society Silicon Valley is offering discounted spay/neuter surgeries for the month of July to encourage the public to sterilize their cats to prevent unwanted litters of kittens. Throughout the month, female cat spays are \$50 while male neuters are just \$25. Space is limited. Appointments can be made by calling (408) 727-3383 ext. 827 or 828.

#### Why Spay/Neuter?

The most obvious reason for spaying or neutering your pet cat is to prevent adding to the pet overpopulation problem. However, there are other real benefits particularly relating to your pet's health.

Some people worry their pet is too young or will get fat and lazy after the operation. It's perfectly safe to spay/neuter cats starting at eight weeks of age; all animals are spayed or neutered before they are adopted from the shelter. With regard to pets getting fat or lazy, most pets get that way because their owners feed them too much and don't exercise them enough. Spaying/neutering actually helps cats live longer, healthier lives and can greatly reduce the incidence of certain cancers. Neutering can also make pets less likely to roam the neighborhood, spray, run away or get into fights.

Spaying, or ovariectomy, is the surgical removal of the animal's ovaries and uterus. By preventing pregnancy, spaying permanently eliminates a source of great physical stress for female animals, including complications such as caesarian section delivery of the kittens. What's more, spaying female cats eliminates:

- Attendant males in abundance while the female is in "heat"
- Spotting during the heat period (false pregnancies increasingly common with age)
- Mammary tumors
- Uterine infections (increasingly common with age; often life-threatening)
- Tumors of the ovaries or uterus stress, leading to increased susceptibility to disease
- Need for extra food during pregnancy and nursing.

Female cats may come into heat every 2-3 weeks. During heat cats will be more irritable and nervous than usual, and may even become aggressive and damage furniture or attack strangers. They will also howl and rub excessively.

By improving your cat's health, spaying or neutering can also increase her or his life span. Best of all, altering will allow your pet more opportunities to be a member of the family, an unconditional benefit for everyone!

If you are feeding homeless cats that you do not own, it is important to have them altered. All too often, people feeding the neighborhood stray cat don't get that cat sterilized and find themselves with a litter of unwanted kittens. Our message to these people is be a responsible caregiver and spay/neuter the homeless cat you're feeding.