



## The experts say: “WE FIX FELINES BY FIVE!”

Join us in this campaign to improve the lives and well-being of cats and kittens! We will be listing the veterinarians who promote Fix Felines by Five on our website and welcome your participation. Please sign up for this opportunity to enhance your client base and the welfare of cats in general.

Contact Esther Mechler at [esther@mariansdream.org](mailto:esther@mariansdream.org) with contact information or meet with us at the Marian's Dream booth.

### Here's why they **FIXbyFIVE**:

#### **Richard Speck, DVM**

*Animal Protective League, Springfield, Illinois: At our spay/neuter clinic we see many pregnant cats under one year of age. Usually their owners intended to spay before pregnancy could happen, and had no idea their cats could come in heat as early as 4-5 months of age. The young pregnant cats we don't see go on to have litters. Pet overpopulation is largely driven by young cats that are eventually spayed, but not soon enough to avoid that first accidental litter. Pushing back the traditional age of spaying by just a few weeks will eliminate these unwanted kittens.*

*Spaying by 5 months benefits the veterinarian as well. It increases client retention by eliminating bad behaviors that cause owners to give up their cats, and surgeries performed earlier are easier for the veterinarian and easier on the cat. Ideally, surgeries can be timed at the end of a kitten's distemper series. Spaying by 5 months of age is the single most important thing we can all do to get control of pet overpopulation and reduce the euthanasia rate.*



#### **Vicki Thayer, DVM, DABVP (feline)**

Executive Director and Past President, Winn Feline Foundation

*The health and welfare of cats has long been of paramount importance to veterinarians and cat advocates world-wide. Veterinary medicine has focused on cat population control through improved surgical and non-surgical sterilization methods. The age for altering has traditionally been approximately 6 months of age or older. Unfortunately, many female cats will have delivered a litter of kittens by the time they are spayed, adding to the critical numbers of homeless cats in our communities. Studies from the 1990s comparing altering in kittens of 7 weeks of age to those at 7 months of age have shown that the procedure is safe and feasible. Effective, safe protocols have been created for altering earlier than 6 months of age.*

*Lowering the age of when to spay a female cat by at least one month to 5 months of age is achievable and safe. There are no known contraindications to beginning a "Fix by Five" program for cats. Positive results would be fewer cats that lack homes and loving care.*



Fix by Five Months is a program sponsored by Marian's Dream.

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**Brenda Griffin, DVM, MS, DACVIM**

University of Florida, Recipient of the 2000 AVMA Animal Welfare Award

*Currently, most private veterinary practices recommend 6-9 months of age as the appropriate timing for spaying/neutering. This is not based not on a scientifically defined optimal age for neutering. This age was probably originally chosen because anesthetic and surgical techniques were less advanced at the time and surgical success was more likely in a larger patient. Despite considerable advances in anesthetic and surgical techniques and published data that illustrate shorter surgical times and lower complications rates for younger patients, these recommendations have persisted.*



*Veterinarians routinely see kittens for a series of wellness exams and vaccinations between approximately 6 and 16 weeks of age. At the conclusion of the series, they typically advise owners to schedule an appointment in a couple of months for neutering. This gap in care likely contributes to many pets being neutered following puberty and the births of many unintentional litters. Most owned cats with private veterinarians are best served by neutering between 4 and 5 months of age following standard vaccinations. This allows time for development of immunity through vaccination while ensuring they are neutered prior to sexual maturity. Because there is no gap in veterinary care between the vaccine series and the surgical appointment, owner compliance may be improved since the owner establishes a routine of veterinary appointments for their cat during kitten-hood visits.*

*The value of neutering as a preventive health care measure deserves emphasis. Most notably, when complete ovariectomy or orchietomy is performed, diseases of the uterus, ovaries, and testes, including cystic endometrial hyperplasia, pyometra, prostatitis and various cancers of the gonads themselves, are eliminated. Additionally, there are reports of significant reduction in the risk of mammary carcinoma in spayed versus intact females. Sexually dimorphic behaviors are also influenced by sterilization. Most notably, spraying in tomcats is generally eliminated and intermale aggression is frequently dramatically reduced. Spayed/neutered cats are also less likely to escape and roam – and they often live longer, too. Cats that are constantly in heat or pregnant and those that spray and fight are not desirable pets. Spaying/neutering kittens is an excellent way to promote pet health and to enhance the human-animal bond.*

**Philip A. Bushby, DVM, DACVS**

Recipient of the AVMA Animal Welfare Award in 2012

*A longer healthy life: Recent publications in the veterinary literature have created some doubt about the most appropriate age to spay or neuter pets or even if pets should be spayed or neutered. Sorting through the confusing and often conflicting data on the incidence of certain diseases, cancers and orthopedic conditions is difficult, at best. But one statistic stands out and should make spay neuter decisions easy. Spayed female cats live, on average, 39% longer than intact female cats and neutered male cats live, on average, 62% longer than intact male cats.*



*There can be no question that sterilization of cats leads to a longer, healthier life. So when should the sterilization occur? With absolutely no evidence contradicting the trend to spay or neuter between 4 and 5 months the best time to perform the surgeries is 2 to 3 weeks after the last kitten vaccination appointment. Surgeries at 4 to 5 months of age are safe, easier and faster than at 6 months old or older. Recoveries are quicker.*

**FIXbyFIVE** it saves lives



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