

Incorporating Feline Fix by Five into your Veterinary Practice

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Walk into your local animal shelter in midspring to early summer. Are there lots of kittens? Visit your local Walmart. Are there people giving away kittens? Midspring to early summer is kitten season. Cats can become pregnant at 5 months of age and, when that happens, kittens give birth to kittens. Shelters become overrun with kittens. Pet parents who don't want more cats either relinquish kittens to shelters or try to give kittens away.

As veterinarians we can put an end to the overpopulation of cats. Stopping the cycle of kittens given birth to kittens is easy. It simply takes one change. If your practice is currently waiting until cats are 6 months of age or older before spay/neuter, change the age. Spay / neuter cats by five months of age. **Simply add one more appointment to your standard kitten wellness protocols.** Make no changes in current vaccination and parasite control recommendations except add an appointment for spay/neuter two to three weeks after the last kitten vaccination. Owner compliance will be increased, surgeries will be easier, and, in time, local shelters will not be overrun with kittens.¹

Think about this. There is, at present, no scientifically sound basis for waiting until 6 months of age or older to sterilize cats and no contraindications for spay/neuter at 4 to 5 months of age. Anesthetic concerns about juvenile surgery voiced in the 60s and 70s are no longer valid. There are many anesthetic drugs and protocols in use today that are safe in cats as young as 6 weeks of age. Old fears that castration of juvenile male cats would predispose to urinary obstruction were disproven in the 90s.² There are numerous known health benefits for spay/neuter in cats, in addition to the population management benefits, and there is "no evidence to suggest that pediatric gonadectomy by 5 months of age is linked to any increased risk of disease."³ A survey conducted in 2000 of veterinarians who were, at that time, spaying and neutering cats under 5 months of age, confirmed that the surgeries were easier, faster, and had fewer complications than spay/neuter of cats at 6 months of age or older.⁴

The AVMA, AAHA, AAFP, ASV as well as numerous humane organization have all endorsed the concept of sterilizing cats by 5 months of age. They would not have done this if there were valid medical reasons to delay spay / neuter until 6 months of age. But there are not! And there are numerous reasons to spay/neuter cats prior to 5 months. Make the change. Surgeries are easier, your clients are happier, and kitten season will disappear.

1. Bushby PA, Why the Change, <https://www.felinefixbyfive.org/what-age-spay-neuter-cat>
2. Stubbs WP, Scrogges SL, et al BMS. Prepubertal gonadectomy in the domestic feline: Effects on skeletal, physical and behavioral development. *Vet Surg.* 1993;22.
3. Dale S. When to Spay/Neuter Cats? Vet Consensus Says Fix by Five Months. *Vet Pract News.* 2016.
4. Land TDVM, Wall SDVM. Survey of the Coalition of Spay/Neuter Veterinarians. *J Am Vet Med Assoc.* 2000;216(5).