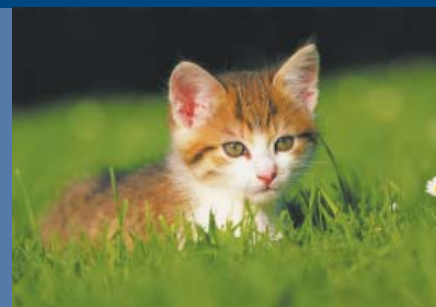


The time to desex is when you get your pet



Thousands of healthy cats and dogs are euthanased (put to sleep) each year in Victoria. This is because not enough homes can be found for them. We have an 'over-supply' of pets in our society.

The good news is something can be done about this tragic problem. Please take the time to read the important information contained in this brochure.

The problem

Thousands of healthy cats and dogs are euthanased (put to sleep) each year in Victoria. This is because not enough homes can be found for them – we have an 'oversupply' of pets.

Many cats and dogs are bred by accident, because owners don't get around to desexing their pets. It is possible for cats to breed from as young as four months of age! Cats and dogs may breed if they escape or are allowed to wander off the property. Sometimes other cats and dogs will get into the yard to breed with confined pets.

Even owners who breed pets on purpose may still have trouble finding homes for all the puppies or kittens. Animal shelters do their best to rehouse unwanted cats, dogs, kittens and puppies. However the sad fact is that most of the animals handed in have to be euthanased.



The solution

If you own a pet and do not intend to breed from it, have it desexed.

You are less likely to forget to desex your pet if you have it done as soon as the pet is purchased or obtained. Cats and dogs can safely be desexed at three months of age – this is called 'early age desexing'. Some councils help pensioners or health care card holders with the cost of pet desexing. Even if you don't own a pet, give copies of this brochure to your friends, family and neighbours. Everyone in the community should know how important it is to desex cats and dogs. If you do intend to use your pet for breeding, first make sure you will be able to find homes for the litter. Female dogs that are not desexed should be in a fully enclosed pen, including a roof. Dogs are "in season" for three weeks, usually twice per year. Female cats that are not desexed should be kept inside the house or an enclosure when "in season". Cats can come "in season" every two weeks between Spring and Autumn.

What is early age desexing?

Early age desexing involves desexing kittens and puppies when they are around three months of age. Many older pets have already had a litter by the time owners desex them.

Desexing pets at three months of age is the only sure way to prevent unwanted breeding. The best time to desex is when you get your pet.

Are there any problems with early age desexing?

Animal shelters have done early age desexing for more than 20 years. Many studies over long periods of time have shown it is just as safe as desexing older cats and dogs.

Some vets may be reluctant to do early age desexing. This could be because they have less experience in early age desexing. They may not be aware of current research showing that it is a safe procedure.

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) and animal welfare groups have produced a booklet and CD for vets called "Early age desexing of puppies and kittens" (2004). This booklet provides vets with evidence for the benefits of early age desexing and the lack of long term side effects. It also looks at anaesthesia issues. The CD includes a video demonstration of the procedure. Your vet can obtain a copy of this booklet by phoning the DPI Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

What are the benefits of early age desexing?

It is easier to desex kittens and puppies at the time you get them – usually around three months of age.

This is also the age at which pets have to be registered with the local council. Owners pay much lower registration fees if pets are desexed.

Desexing may be less stressful for kittens and puppies than it would be for older pets. Adult pets can suffer anxiety when separated from their owners and left with the vet for surgery. Young animals have had less time to become attached to their owners, and tend to be more curious than worried about new places.

For vets, younger animals can be easier, faster and cheaper to desex. They may also recover more quickly than older cats and dogs.

Cats and dogs that are not desexed cause most pet nuisance problems in the community. For example, cats that are not desexed will mark their territory by spraying strong smelling urine in houses and gardens. They also create noise when fighting and yowling. This behaviour can be hard to change.

Desexing pets at three months of age stops these problems occurring in the first place. In addition, desexing pets prevents them from getting certain types of cancer.

Best of all, desexing your pet means you are helping solve the problem of unwanted pets in society.

Remember – the time to desex is when you get your pet.

The penalty for abandoning cats or dogs is up to \$6,000 or 6 months imprisonment (under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986). Dumped animals are likely to suffer starvation and disease, which can lead to death. Report cases of abandoned cats or dogs to your local council or the RSPCA.

For more advice or information

Contact your local council if you have questions about your rights and responsibilities as a pet owner. Your council will also deal with concerns about wandering or nuisance pets.

For general information about responsible pet ownership, and contact details for relevant pet organisations, visit www.pets.dpi.vic.gov.au or call 136 186 for the cost of a local call.



Published by the Victorian Government Department of Primary Industries, January 2009
© The State of Victoria, Department of Primary Industries, 2009.
This publication is copyright. No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.
ISBN 978-1-74217-304-7 (print)
ISBN 978-1-74217-305-4 (online)
Job No. CC/08/0036

Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

For further information, visit the DPI Website at www.dpi.vic.gov.au or contact the DPI Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

If you would like to receive this information/publication in an accessible format (such as large print or audio) please call the Customer Service Centre on: 136 186, TTY: 1800 122 969, or email customer.service@dpi.vic.gov.au