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## **Preventative Medicine: Why it's so important to spay your dog**

A spay is called Ovariohysterectomy-which is removal of the uterus and ovaries. Although it is major abdominal surgery, it is a routinely performed procedure. The main goal of doing this is to prevent accidental pregnancy. A dog in heat will attract males, who will go through screen doors; leap tall fences in a single bound, and do just about anything to get to her. Due to pet overpopulation, accidental matings are discouraged. In addition to population control, there are other very important reasons. A dog without uterus or ovaries cannot get uterine or ovarian cancer. Further, older dogs are prone to a lifethreatening uterine infection called pyometra, where the uterus fills up with pus (yuck). Also, spaying your dog prevents mammary tumors (breast cancer) if done at a young age. Dogs spayed before their first heat have a 0.05% chance of getting mammary tumors. After their first heat, but before their second, they have an 8% chance. After their second, but before their third, they have a 26% chance of getting mammary tumors. After that point, there is no difference between spayed and unspayed dogs. 50% of mammary tumors are malignant so they are something to be prevented. We recommend spaying at 6 months of age. Although it can be done earlier, we recommend waiting because the surgery is easier, the anesthetic less risky, and it's a good time to screen for hip or elbow dysplasia. Please spay your pets early. Here in Orange County, the license is a little cheaper for spayed pets. In Los Angeles County, there is a large difference in price and Orange County may not be far behind.