



## Helping Cat Owners Prevent Homeless Pets

(NAPSA)—Spaying or neutering your cat is considered one of the most effective ways to reduce pet overpopulation. That's the word from experts such as the American Veterinary Medical Association. They also say the procedure is safe for kittens as young as 8 to 10 weeks old.

In addition to pet population control, spaying a female cat before her first heat cycle amplifies a number of health benefits. It reduces the risk of certain mammary and reproductive cancers, as well as potentially fatal infections.

Additional benefits include:

• **Reduced aggression:** Cats that have been spayed or neutered are less aggressive than unaltered pets. This leads to fewer fights, which results in a lower risk of contracting contagious diseases and lower vet bills.

• **Less wandering:** Cats that aren't fixed are more likely to stray from home, especially when they are in heat and searching for a mate. Spaying and neutering reduces this urge and keeps your pet close to home.

• **Less marking:** Cats often "claim" their territory by marking with urine—even if that "territory" is your couch. After a spay/neuter procedure, cats become much less territorial, and this behavior decreases dramatically.

While it can be beneficial to spay your cat anytime of year, many believe late winter and early spring are the most effective times. That's because by spaying a cat in advance of its heat cycle, it's possible to prevent unwanted litters from being born.

Spring is known to animal shelters across the country as "kitten season" due to the large influx of unwanted litters they receive during this time. Unfortu-



**Experts say having a cat spayed in the winter can often help to reduce the number of unwanted or homeless kittens the following spring.**

nately, the large number of kittens makes it difficult, or even impossible, for shelters to find homes for them all.

That's why PetSmart Charities, a leader in pet adoptions and the largest funder of animal welfare efforts in North America, sponsors its "Beat the Heat" campaign each year.

Through this campaign, animal welfare organizations across the country provide spay surgeries for just \$20 for female cats and kittens during the month of February. This reduced cost makes it more affordable for pet parents to fix their cat, which ultimately helps to reduce the homeless cat population.

The "Beat the Heat" campaign provides nearly \$600,000 to clinics across the country for affordable, high-quality surgeries. Approximately 17,488 female cats will receive the surgery as a result. It serves as a gentle reminder to cat owners to sterilize their pets before they go into heat this year.

To learn more, visit [www.pet-smartcharities.org](http://www.pet-smartcharities.org).