



Handout for new owners of female cats not neutered by Cats Protection

During your female cat's time in Cats Protection's care it has not been deemed necessary for her to be neutered by the charity. This may be because Cats Protection was informed that she was neutered before she came to us.

Alternatively, she may have come into care as a 'female cat of unknown neutered status.' This means that Cats Protection was not aware of whether she had previously been neutered/spayed (removal of the ovaries and uterus to prevent pregnancy) or whether she was still entire (ovaries and uterus still present).

There are different ways to try and determine whether a female cat has been neutered or not. The definitive test is an exploratory operation to identify whether the ovaries and uterus are present. This involves a general anaesthetic and abdominal surgery. While in some cases this is the only way to find out if a female cat has been neutered, Cats Protection aims to avoid putting cats through unnecessary surgery where possible. As there are other, non-invasive means of assessing a female cat's neutered status, Cats Protection opts to use these methods in the first instance.

This guidance explains the reasons Cats Protection may not have needed to neuter your adopted cat. Your cat's individual reason will be noted on the Cats Protection 'Medical Summary Form' given to you at the point of adoption.

• **Informed neutered** – Cats Protection may have received information that indicates your cat has been neutered before she came to us. This information may have come from:

- the previous vet's medical records – Cats Protection may have clinical notes from the veterinary surgery that performed the neuter surgery for your cat
- microchip details suggest neutered – Some cats will have their neuter status recorded in their microchip details
- owner informed neutered – Sometimes the relinquishing owner will inform us that their cat has been neutered previously but they may not be able to provide a veterinary medical history. For example, the cat may have been neutered a long time ago. In the vast majority of cases this information from the owner proves to be very accurate. However, in a very small number of cases the information we receive may not be correct and these cats may go on to show signs of being unneutered, for example displaying the behaviours of being 'in season'

• **Shaved for a scar** – As with humans, surgical procedures in cats generally leave a visible scar on the skin but, unlike in humans, these are covered by the cat's fur. An operation to neuter a female cat will often leave a tell-tale surgical scar on the left side or the underside of the cat's tummy, depending on how the operation was carried out. By shaving away the fur on the cat's side and tummy, if the cat has been neutered, it is usually possible to identify a scar. Finding a scar is highly suggestive of the cat being neutered. If your cat has been shaved and a surgical scar in the correct location has been identified, this suggests your cat has been neutered and means that an operation to check is unnecessary. However, in a very small number of cases, female cats with a scar suggestive of neutering do go on to show signs of being unneutered, for example displaying the behaviours of being 'in season'.

• **LH test** – A blood test is now available that measures the level of a hormone called LH (luteinising hormone) in a cat's bloodstream. If your cat has had an LH test with a positive result this indicates that she has been neutered and that an operation to check is unnecessary. Having carried out a scientific study to assess the performance of the LH test in determining whether a female cat is neutered or not, Cats Protection has a high level of confidence in this result*. However, no test is perfect and there is a small chance of a positive LH result being incorrect (a false positive) and a cat who is assumed neutered actually still being entire and able to come into season and become pregnant.



What signs might my cat show if she is in season or pregnant?

Signs of being in season include:

- vocalising ('calling')
- rubbing against furniture, walls and people
- rolling on the floor, displaying the mating position with the hindquarters and tail raised
- a strong urge to get out of the house and look for mates

Signs of pregnancy include:

- weight gain
- swelling of the tummy
- enlargement of the mammary glands
- in the late stages, nesting behaviours and the presence of milk in the mammary glands

If you notice any of these signs, please contact your vet as soon as possible and arrange for your cat to be examined. Please also contact the Cats Protection branch or centre you adopted your cat from. If it is suspected that your cat is still entire, Cats Protection will be able to assist in getting her neutered.