

# Should My Pet Pig Be Spayed or Neutered?

The first and most important ingredient to having a good relationship with a pet pig is to purchase an altered one. The neutering process mitigates hormonal uproar, leaving you a more manageable pet. Boars have a distinctive odor that becomes stronger and more pungent as the animal ages. They also display very manly behaviors (humping, incessant nudging, frothing about the muzzle) beginning at a very early age. While these male manifestations are very normal, they are not at all desirable traits in a pet pig. Hence, males should be neutered when they are very young (I prefer three weeks of age). The breeder should have this procedure done before the pig is offered for adoption.

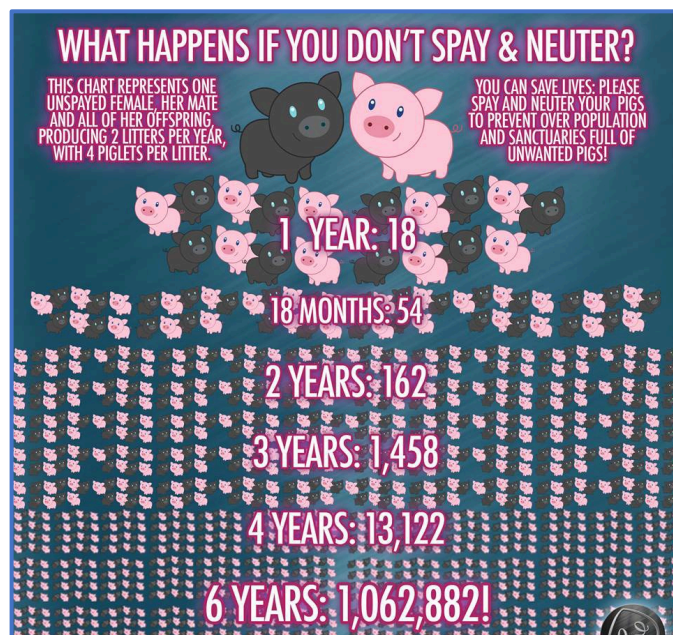
Female potbellied pigs can start cycling as early as three months of age. From their first cycle on, you can expect your piggy to come into heat every twenty-one days, during which time she will be moody, urinate more frequently (probably making a few potty mistakes), become easily agitated...in other words, she will have **PPMS** (Porcine Premenstrual Syndrome). This is not a pretty predicament! If your female is to be a pet, why put her, not to mention yourself, through this distress every three weeks?

Spaying a female piglet is not any more difficult than spaying a cat or dog. The two key factors here are:

1. Work with a veterinarian who has experience spaying potbellied pigs.
2. Optimally, have this procedure done between the ages of six and twelve weeks, before the first heat cycle, and definitely NOT when the pig is in heat.

There is a bit of controversy concerning the best time to spay, but the consensus I have gleaned from talking with *many* breeders, veterinarians and pet owners is *the earlier the better*. Again, I urge you to buy your pig *a la* spayed if at all possible. However, if this is impractical, protect yourself in case something unexpected happens during surgery. I know of several pet owners who lost their sweetie girls after this procedure.

With any surgical procedure there is an inherent risk. I strongly believe that the breeder should take the responsibility for having their pet pigs altered prior to adoption. It should not be necessary for the new owner to risk losing the animal they love due to complications resulting from spaying or neutering. If it is not possible to obtain an altered animal, the breeder should help the new pig owner locate a veterinarian qualified and experienced with these procedures on potbellied pigs. It would be a good idea to draw up a written agreement that explains the responsibility of the breeder should something happen to the piglet during or after the surgery.



Another reason for spaying and neutering is to decrease the overpopulation of unwanted, neglected, and abused pigs in overcrowded shelters and sanctuaries.