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Having a litter, for the children.....

These words always make our hearts sink. Why? you ask. What better way to teach our children the facts of life than letting them see the process at first hand in their own home. While the idea of letting your cat or dog have kittens or puppies, so the children can learn, has the right intentions behind it, there are many holes in the plan.



What can go wrong?

- Your children probably won't see the mating, especially if it's a cat. If they do, they may get a bad impression of sex, as it often seems painful and can involve aggressive behaviour.
- Seeing a pregnant animal is very like seeing a pregnant human, so there is nothing really new about this for most children.
- Your children probably won't see the birth, as this usually occurs at night and owners are often not even aware of it. If the birth goes wrong, children could be frightened by emergency procedures or even the death of your pet.
- If you can't find homes for all the puppies or kittens, they may end up on "death row" with all the other animals at shelters. Is this a lesson you want your children to learn from?
- If you do find a home for every puppy or kitten, they may be homes that would otherwise have taken pets that were in a rescue shelter, thus depriving 'disadvantaged' animals with homes.
- How will you check out the homes your special pet's offspring go to? How will you know they are good homes?



What are the alternatives?

- Find a registered breeder (Kennel Union of SA) and ask if you can allow your children to visit the animals before and after the birth, and to see the development of the pups or kittens. Bear in mind that a mother with a litter is very sensitive and children may not be allowed to go too close, make a noise or touch them in the first few days.
- Buy a good book about the facts of life, whether human or animal. There are plenty in your local library.
- Find a good documentary or two about the "birds and the bees". Again, there may be some at the library.
- Take your children to visit an animal rescue shelter near you. Teach them about being humane and thinking about other animals, not just your own. Teach them about getting pets sterilised so that they do not contribute to the excessive number of puppies and kittens needing good homes.

Is letting your dog or cat have a litter going to benefit the animal, or is it purely for you own selfish purpose?



Hundreds of dogs and cats are euthanased each week in South Africa because there are not enough good homes for them all. By allowing your pet to breed and homing the offspring yourselves you may be depriving other, less fortunate, animals of homes – the ones that roam the streets or get stuck in rescue shelters.

Parents, have your dogs and cats sterilised BEFORE they have a litter (before 6 months of age, earlier if possible). Your pet's personality will not change if it is sterilised. Don't contribute to the population of unwanted puppies and kittens.

REASONS TO STERILISE YOUR CATS AND DOGS

- Many healthy pets face euthanasia each month because there are not enough homes.
- Each female cat or dog can produce more than 60,000 new lives in 7 years.
- Homeless and hungry stray pets could be aggressive or carry disease, threatening your own pets or children.
- Repeated pregnancies cause unnecessary strain on the mother's body.
- Unsterilised females face an increased risk of breast cancer.
- Uterine infections are common in unsterilised females.
- Sexually active males spray or mark their territories and so cause a smell.
- Sexually active males roam and jump fences to get to females on heat, and are aggressive, fighting each other.
- Unsterilised males are also vulnerable to prostate disease and perianal hernias.
- Unsterilised cats are more likely to catch feline AIDS or leukemia.
- Your pet's personality will not change if it is sterilised – sterilised dogs are just as effective watch dogs and are as loyal and reliable as before sterilisation.
- Your pet does not need to have a litter – there are no benefits, only the risks mentioned above.

STERILISE - SAVE LIVES!