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## Pet Plastic Surgery

BOOKMARK | By Gail Eisenberg | May 13, 2009 1:07 PM



The fact that pets often look like their owners isn't cause for concern, unless of course that pet owner happens to be Joan Rivers. Nose jobs, face-lifts, silicone implants and tummy tucks. Yes, I'm talking cosmetic surgery for pets, but while some procedures are deemed medical necessities, others are simply at the animals' expense.

"General [anesthesia](#) is certainly not without risk," says Janet R. Kovak, DVM, ACVS of New York City's Animal Medical Center, "though the chances of complication in young and healthy animals is low. We recommend a chest x-ray and blood work screening for animals over the age of six. Our first priority is to make sure we're not making any decision that puts the animal at risk."

At upwards of thousands of dollars a pop, Brachycephalic dogs ([Pugs](#), English and French Bulldogs, [Boston Terriers](#)) with the short nose and face are the most common breeds needing rhinoplasty. Chin lifts might be performed to relieve excessive drooling in large breeds like Newfoundlands, Bloodhounds and [Mastiffs](#). Other breeds such as the [Bulldog](#) are prone to skin folds around the eyes, nose, cheeks and vulva, which can cause recurrent bacterial infections.

In these cases, veterinary surgeons advocate a 'nip and tuck' in those areas. Whether or not cosmetic [surgery](#) is necessary is determined on a case-by-case basis. "But," Kovak says, "as members of particular breeds, they're predisposed to it. There's an ongoing debate here, but as long as breeders continue to breed them, they'll remain susceptible."

The debate? The Humane Society's complete policy on the topic of cosmetic surgery can be found on their Website ([www.hsus.org](#)). In short, they oppose unnecessary surgical procedures when done for cosmetic purposes or to disguise natural imperfections of any animal. The American Kennel Club does not allow dogs with physical alterations to be entered in competitions besides cropping of ears and tails to meet breed standards. In fact, judges are trained to inspect all of a dog's parts to ensure that there are no cosmetic additions or corrections.

Which leads us to an invention called Neuticles, silicone testicular implants that come in different shapes and sizes, mainly used for neutered pets. Despite its FDA approval, lukewarm popularity and subsequent silicone inventions by founder Gregg Miller, Neuticles are not encouraged. "Anytime you put a foreign material implant into an animal you run the risk of an adverse reaction," urges Kovak.

There are fewer plastic surgeries of any kind performed on cats. With its narrow nose, the Persian is the most likely candidate for rhinoplasty. When considering felines, however, we get into the hot-button issue of declawing. My mantra? Get a cat or get a couch.

Unfortunately, many people choose to do both and it is often at the cat's expense. Commonly believed to be a simple surgery, declawing can be likened to cutting off each human finger at the last knuckle. The American [Veterinary](#) Medical Association (AVMA) has not banned the practice, but it certainly discourages it. "However," explains Kovak, "for those who are immunosuppressed -- someone with HIV or the [elderly](#) -- there is medical justification for the procedure. In those instances, the feline is given an abundant amount of pain medication."

A consultation with a surgeon should be made to discuss the risks and rewards before any surgery. "Fortunately," says Kovak, "pet owners treat their pets like family, and are usually easily discouraged from putting their pet in harm's way."

Gail Eisenberg is a NYC-based freelance writer, co-star of the upcoming LOGO series, Cat Eisenberg, Dog Eisenberg, and Mom to her Lab mix, Taxi. Visit her at [www.GailEisenberg.com](#).

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