

Importance of Spay/Neuter



Objective: to support the need for spay/neuter assistance programs in the state and to urge cat and dog owners, in particular, to have their animals spay/neutered at the earliest possible date.

Introduction

Pet overpopulation is a problem in most states. West Virginia is no exception.

Some companion animal guardians may not understand the depths of the pet overpopulation issue, thinking they can find homes for their animals' litters.

Some owners don't seem to understand or comprehend the health benefits of spaying/neutering their companions; others simply take the unwanted litters to shelters where the majority will likely be euthanized.

Some guardians, however, simply cannot afford the life-saving surgery that will make their animals happier and healthier companions.

The Federation of Humane Organizations of West Virginia (FOHO WV) supports the need for spay/neuter assistance programs in the state and urges cat and dog owners, in particular to have their animals spay/neutered at the earliest possible date.

Early S/N saves injuries from roaming & lives of unwanted litters

We've seen the statistics that in only seven years, a female cat and her offspring can produce 420,000 cats; and in just six years, a female dog and her offspring can produce as many as 67,000 puppies. While these numbers are apocryphal (the operative word being "can," as most don't reproduce at anywhere near that rate), the fact of the matter is we are still killing healthy, vibrant, energetic

dogs and cats because too many animals reproduce.

In West Virginia alone, 35 percent of all owned companion animals are not altered out of the 67 percent of West Virginia households that own animals. Most likely some of those unaltered animals live in homes where the income is so low that putting food on the table for the children takes priority over surgery for the cat.

But because these animals are allowed to reproduce, of the estimated 144,321 animals who entered West Virginia shelters in 2011, 77,000 were killed. That translates to 53 percent dead—the majority of whom were healthy, adoptable animals killed simply because they were born.¹

These numbers are staggering. They need not be this high. All cats and dogs should be spayed/neutered before they reach the age of sexual maturity, which is typically around 6 months. But owners must not wait until that magical date. Early age spay/neuter is available in most locations. Cats and dogs as young as 8 weeks who weigh at least 2 pounds may be eligible for this life-saving surgery.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has adopted a resolution that endorses the concept of early-age spay/neuter to stem the overpopulation of cats and dogs. The sponsors of the resolution are convinced that the early-age approach will reduce euthanasia of unwanted pets by preventing unwanted litters and by making shelter poli-

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cies of spay/neuter before adoption more effective. The resolution states, "Resolved, that AVMA supports the concept of early (8-16 weeks of age) ovariohysterectomies/gonadectomies in dogs and cats, in an effort to stem the overpopulation in these species."²

With West Virginia having a significantly higher rate of animals entering its shelters — 16 percent vs. the national average of 6 percent — FOHO WV is looking to all avenues to help find ways to get the message out to pet owners that they are part of the problem if they allow their animals to reproduce.

FOHO WV also supports funding for spay/neuter programs that will help those who are financially unable to pay the full price for these surgeries.³

With the recent passage of the WV Spay Neuter Assistance bill into law, WV is on the right path to reducing the number of unwanted animals. Certainly, funding for this endeavor is still a challenge but the mechanism is in place now for the state to move forward. FOHO WV is an

Below is a list of some privately funded services and funding for spay/neuter assistance in West Virginia.

- Spay Today, (baacs.org/sections/view/248) located in Charles Town, WV, works with veterinarians in the area to offer spay/neuter assistance and other services to everyone – not just low-income clients. Since 2001, Spay Today has arranged for the spaying/neutering of 38,068 cats, dogs, rabbits, and other animals.
- Help for Animals, Inc. (helpforanimals.net), located in Barboursville, WV, operates a high-volume spay/neuter clinic. Since opening in 1997, they have performed over 72,000 spay/neuter operations, doing almost 9,000 in 2012.
- The Marshall County, WV, Tiffany Dlesk Spay/Neuter Clinic is designed to assist lower income families by offering spay/neuter services to pets in need. The clinic services the tri-state area, including (but not limited to) Marshall, Ohio, Wetzel, and Belmont Counties.
- M-SNAP (m-snap.org), the Mountaineer Spay Neuter Assis-

- tance Program in the Morgantown area, has altered more than 4,000 animals. They have issued, 4,113 vouchers (2,720 for cats and 1,393 for dogs). It is an example of a successful local program working with local vets for a solution.
- Save a Kitty Feral Cat Program (saveakitty.org) is located in the Wood County area. They have reduced the rate of cats coming into the Parkersburg Humane Society Shelter by their aggressive spay/neuter program of feral and free roaming cats.
 - The Taylor County program P.U.R.R. West Virginia (purrwv.org) expanded its resources to rescue cats from seven shelters and to engage in direct outreach to 13 WV counties. P.U.R.R. did over 1,300 spay/neuters last year while adopting out 537 cats.
 - Spay WV (a WV nonprofit corporation located in Cabell County and an affiliate of Spay USA) has a database of spay/neuter assistance available throughout the state. Spay WV Spay/Neuter Database has the

- potential to help residents of the more isolated areas of the state who have few or no services available. Call 1-877-772-9981.
- There are numerous other programs in West Virginia, offered through shelters and rescue groups. For example, the Monroe County Animal League, Inc. (members.petfinder.com/~WV16/spayneuter.htm) offers financial support for individuals who qualify based on income.
 - From November 2009 through 2011, SNAP WV (snapwv.org) administered \$25,000 in matching spay/neuter grants to 10 groups with an allocation from the WV State Legislature, thereby successfully altering more than 1,400 animals.
- Presently, SNAP WV has no funding to allot. FOHO WV, which supports SNAP WV, is working on the statewide Spay Neuter Assistance Fund which will be administered by the WV Department of Agriculture.

advisor to the Department of Agriculture in establishing the rules and regulations for the newly established Spay Neuter Assistance Fund. The fund will be administrated from the Department of Agriculture.

Private sources of funding are dependent on the generosity of those who donate to the organizations and on funds available through animal-related charitable organizations, such as PetSmart Charities.

But funding alone won't totally reduce the number of unwanted animals being born in this state. It is up to each and every pet owner to be responsible and have his or her cat, dog, rabbit, or other small animal spayed/neutered. There are not

enough homes in our state to absorb all the unwanted litters.

Conclusion

Spaying/neutering companion animals has these benefits:

- **will reduce their need to roam** to find mates which will reduce the number of physical altercations that might require taking the animal to a veterinary emergency room. Additionally,
- **spay/neuter surgeries are lifesaving**—not just for the animal undergoing the surgery but also for those animals who would have been born only to die in our state's animal shel-

ters, on the road, in the wilderness, or at the hands of unscrupulous people. We can

- **end the killing of healthy dogs and cats in West Virginia shelters** simply by supporting and promoting spay/neuter assistance programs statewide.
- By doing so, we can **save millions in taxpayer dollars** that are now being spent to house and euthanize healthy animals and put that money into other worthy programs.

Euthanasia is simply not an acceptable method of controlling a community's cat and dog overpopulation. Be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Spay/neuter your companion animal now.

Endnotes

1. Federation of Humane Organizations of West Virginia Fall 2012 Newsletter, www.fohowv.org
2. <http://vetmed.illinois.edu/ope/ivb/spay-neu.htm>
3. Federation of Humane Organizations of West Virginia Fall 2012