

HSUS/Conklin

## Overload!

Our community is facing an overload of pet animals. Too many dogs and cats are not wanted anywhere. They are treated like disposable items instead of living creatures.

Pets are abandoned when owners tire of caring for them. Unwanted litters are left at doorsteps or along roadsides. Every year in the U.S., approximately 7.6 million cats and dogs are euthanatized because lasting, loving homes cannot be found for them.

You can help end this tragedy by making sure your pet doesn't contribute to the surplus of dogs and cats. Have your pet spayed or neutered by a veterinarian.

Being a responsible pet owner by having your pet sterilized is the first and most important step you can make towards reducing the number of unwanted animals. There simply are not enough homes for them all.

Help reduce the pet population so that each animal gets the care and respect it deserves.



The Humane Society  
of the United States  
2100 L Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037

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## Be a Responsible Pet Owner.

12 million cats and dogs were turned  
in to animal shelters last year.

Love, license, leash.

Spay or neuter.

The Humane Society of the United States  
can provide you with more information  
about how to be a responsible pet owner  
and how to help end the problem of pet  
overpopulation. If you would like more in-  
formation, write to the address on the back  
of this brochure.



The Humane Society of the United States  
2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037

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# WHAT'S YOUR EXCUSE

FOR ALL THOSE

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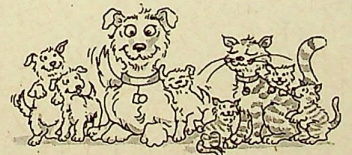
LITTERS OF

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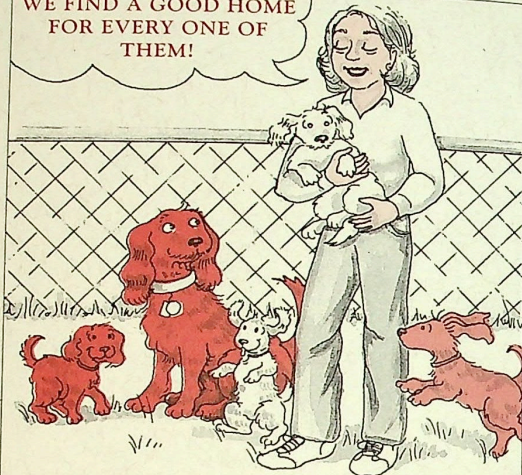
PUPPIES AND

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KITTENS?



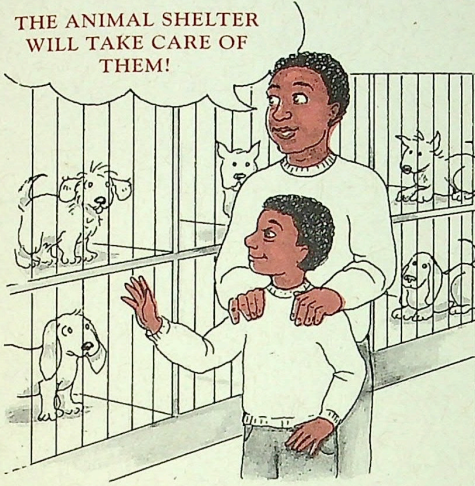
**WE FIND A GOOD HOME FOR EVERY ONE OF THEM!**



But how many of us are still in those homes a year or two later? How many litters will our kittens and puppies have? There aren't enough homes for all of us—think of all the pets who have already been given to shelters!



**THE ANIMAL SHELTER WILL TAKE CARE OF THEM!**



Animal shelters do their best. But they can't find a home for every dog and cat given to them, because there are just too many. You can help by being a responsible pet owner!



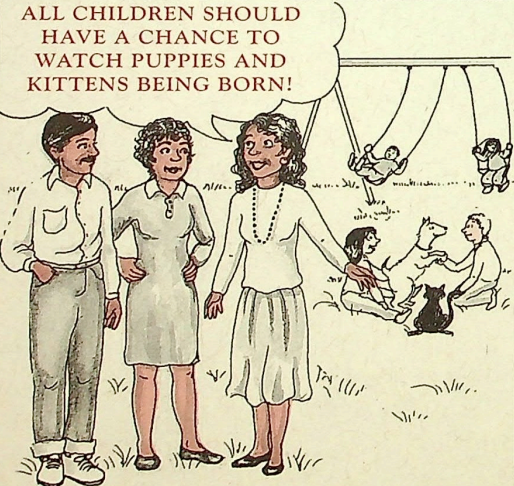
**SPAYING OR NEUTERING WILL HURT THEM!**



Not true! Your veterinarian will tell you that spaying and neutering are safe operations. After we're spayed or neutered, we'll be healthier and better companions. And neutered dogs are less likely to bite!



**ALL CHILDREN SHOULD HAVE A CHANCE TO WATCH PUPPIES AND KITTENS BEING BORN!**



Children should be taught about the problem of pet overpopulation and encouraged to help solve it—not add to it! Parents can explain how animals are born without bringing more unwanted pets into the world.



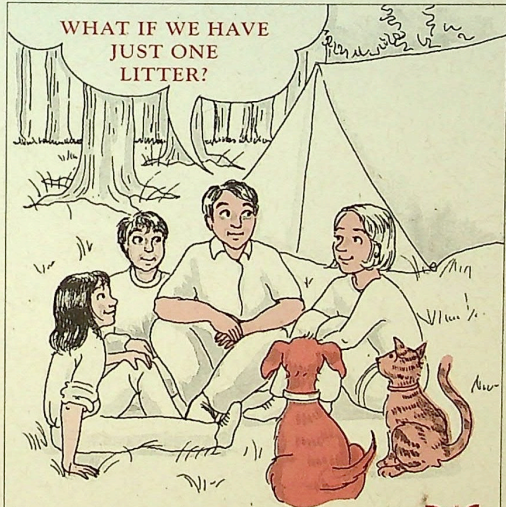
**I CAN'T AFFORD TO HAVE MY PET SPAYED OR NEUTERED!**



You really can't afford not to! The one-time cost for these operations adds up to just pennies a day over your pet's lifetime. That's a very small price to pay for helping your best friend to lead a healthier, happier life! You'll be happier too, knowing that you have done your part to prevent the suffering of dogs and cats.



**WHAT IF WE HAVE JUST ONE LITTER?**



There are millions of homeless dogs and cats. It's a very big problem that has grown one animal at a time. Just one litter is one litter too many.



## Study Quantifies Reasons for Pet Relinquishment

The findings are in from an intensive study to determine and quantify the reasons pet owners relinquish their dogs and cats to shelters, reports the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Conducted at 12 shelters, the study involved personal interviews of people surrendering dogs and cats. The National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy sponsored the study, through donations from several organizations.

Trained interviewers used a 66-item questionnaire that included questions relating to the animal(s) relinquished as well the relinquisher. During the 12-month study period 3,414 people were interviewed who had relinquished 2,096 dogs and 1,319 cats. Of those, 3,041 were individually relinquished, 280 were surrendered in litters, and 94 were in litters relinquished with the bitches.

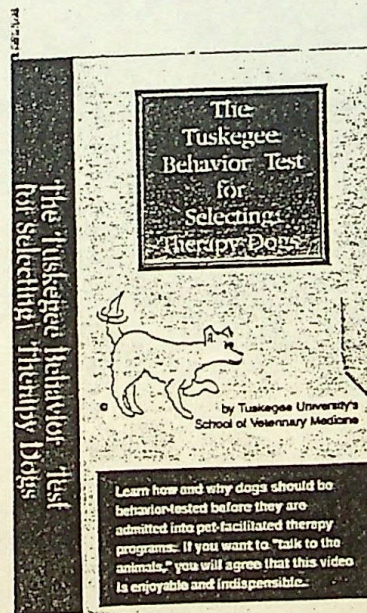
Seventy-one causes were given for relinquishment. They are being condensed into 12 categories. Of those 71, the top 10 reasons given for relinquishment of dogs and cats are as follows:

1. Requests for euthanasia because of illness (7.4%).
2. Moving (7.3%).
3. Found animal (of unknown origin) (6.6%).
4. Landlord will not allow pets (5.3%).
5. Owner has too many animals (4.8%).
6. Euthanasia because of animal's age (4.6%).
7. Cost of maintenance of pets (4.1%).
8. Animal is ill (4.1%).

9. Allergies within the family (3.9%).
10. House soiling (3.37%).

As a group, pet behavior problems accounted for the greatest reason for relinquishment, representing 12 percent of the total.

Dr. M.D. Salman, scientific adviser for the NCPPSP, said, "These are the first quantitative measurements of the causes of relinquishment. However, we must be cautious in terms of what people claim as the cause of relinquishment."



Behavior Test Video from Tuskegee

"This information is based only on their responses, without any investigation to evaluate the reliability of their claims."

"An analysis is going on in which we will try to associate claimed causes of relinquishment with the type of people and animals. We have quantitative measurements

now, but we won't know their meaning until we start to link them with the characteristics of the people and animals."

The 12 animal care and control agencies included in the study were located in Sacramento County, CA (three); Front Range, CO (three); Knoxville, TN (two); Louisville, KY (two); Bergen County, NJ (one); and New York City (one).

The study data will continue to be analyzed, and then combined with additional research being conducted by the NCPPSP. Upcoming reports will include information on owner demographics, lifestyle issues, and previous knowledge of pet care as associated with relinquishment of animals at shelters in the study.

The National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy is a coalition of 10 of America's foremost animal organizations concerned about unwanted pets. The AVMA is a member. The coalition gathers and analyzes reliable data that further characterize the number, origin, and disposition of dogs and cats. It also promotes responsible stewardship of companion animals and recommends programs to reduce the number of surplus/unwanted pets.

*Reprinted courtesy of the canine times, an e-mail newsletter. Contributed by D. Tebault. To reach the Newsletter Editor: Send e-mail to [ownercaninetimes@po.databack.com](mailto:ownercaninetimes@po.databack.com).*



## A Large Response to National Statistical Survey of Shelters

In February 1995, the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy (NCPSP) sent out a short survey card to 4,700 shelters in the U.S. The card requested some basic statistics: number of dogs and cats entering through various methods, and the disposition of these animals. A follow-up mailing was sent that June.

The response from 1,100 shelters, though seemingly small, was the largest known response to a national statistical survey of shelters.

Unfortunately, these statistics cannot be extrapolated to represent the nation, since the reporting shelters do not represent a random sampling and because there is no clear relationship (and therefore formula) between the size of a community and the number of and ways animals are received or dealt with.

The survey did reveal that many shelters do not keep statistical information at all. But those that do keep statistics tend to be animal-control related, perhaps because civic leaders understand the importance and usefulness of numbers.

This could account for why over half the respondents were animal-control agencies and another 16 percent were shelters with animal-control housing contracts. Perhaps this large percentage of animal-control respondents in turn accounts for the large percentage (47.4 percent) of animals reported to have entered through an animal-control function.

But keeping within the confines of the 1,100 shelters that responded, the survey—representing over four million animals—had some interesting results. It found that dogs and cats were adopted at nearly the same rate, though dogs were—not surprisingly—far more likely to be reclaimed by their owners. Also as expected, 25 percent more cats were euthanized than

dogs, but were picked up by animal control 10 percent less often than dogs. Around a quarter of both the dogs and cats found their way to shelters through “other” sources, presumably Good Samaritans bringing in strays. And the total number euthanized came to nearly 64 percent.

The NCPSP will again seek statistics, but this time they’re offering incentives to any shelter that responds. The coalition of ten groups from the animal-protection, breeding, and veterinary fields hopes over time to help standardize the process for statistical analysis, and to continue to motivate shelters to track these numbers. Look for your survey card to arrive soon.

The response, representing over four million animals, showed a 64-percent euthanasia rate.

### Source of Dogs and Cats

Entering reporting shelters in 1994

	% submitted by AC	% relinquished by owner	% other	total number
Dogs	51.0	27.7	21.3	2,031,909
Cats	39.7	36.1	25.2	1,668,996
Unspecified as dogs or cats	59.9	18.2	24.9	547,919
Overall	47.4	29.3	23.3	4,329,914

### Disposition of Dogs and Cats

Entering reporting shelters in 1994

	% adopted	% reclaimed by owner	% euthanized	other	total number
Dogs	25.4	15.6	56.0	3.0	2,031,909
Cats	22.6	2.1	71.9	3.5	1,576,087
Unspecified as dogs or cats	20.4	9.1	67.8	2.7	523,836
Overall	23.6	9.6	63.6	3.2	4,131,831

### Type of Shelter Responding

To 1994 Census (%)

Local gov. animal control agency	53.1
Private, nonprofit shelter	21.9
Private, nonprofit w/housing contract	16.0
Other	9.0
Total	1,100

## Big Help for Shelters

It's almost time for Nickelodeon's Big Help, where kids nationwide pledge millions of volunteer hours in their communities. Don't miss out on using these enthusiastic young volunteers willing to do the muckiest of jobs to help animals. And this year, AHA's partner is Big Brothers Big Sisters, so you get access to adult volunteers too.

■ For AHA's packet of ideas, generously sponsored by Heinz Homeless Pets Program, on how to involve these determined kids during this unique time, or any time, call AHA at 800-227-4645.

Kid volunteers will be looking for ways to help in your community.

# Don't Give Up on the Spay/Neuter Message

*Pet overpopulation is a multifaceted problem whose ultimate solution depends on fostering true, universal stewardship of companion animals. Spaying and neutering remains a vital key.*

By Martha C. Armstrong

Just over 20 years ago, The Humane Society of the United States joined forces with the American Humane Association, the American Kennel Club, the American Veterinary Medical Association and several other national groups to look at the issue of controlling the

Ten years later, in 1986, The HSUS felt that more progress needed to be made in reducing and eventually eliminating the numbers of kittens and puppies who were born with scant hope of finding permanent, caring homes. In April of 1988, we launched the "Be a P.A.L.—Prevent A Litter" campaign by declaring April "Prevent A Litter" Month. The materials we developed for use by shelters and humane societies include posters, print ads, and suggested activities to encourage pet owners to spay or neuter their pets. Thanks in part to Be a P.A.L. and many other efforts, the numbers of animals turned into shelters—this time in many smaller communities—continued to decline.

But another 10 years have passed and, as we in the animal protection movement know firsthand, there still exists an unacceptable number of animals for whom no suitable homes can be found.

The numbers of surplus animals—especially puppies—vary from region to region and community to community. But nationwide too many animals are being born and they are still too easily obtained by pet owners unwilling to make a lifetime commitment. Spaying and neutering remains an important message.

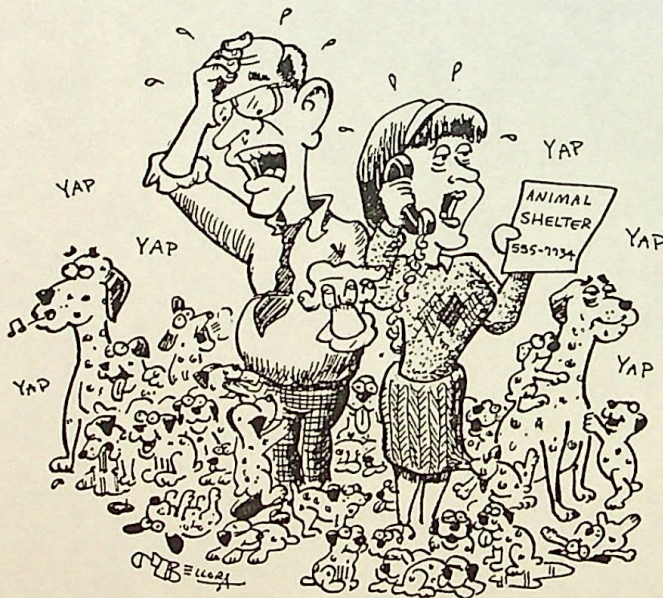
This year, The HSUS has moved "Prevent A Litter" Month from April to February to coincide with the celebration of another popular and highly successful program aimed at reducing unwanted litters of dogs

and cats: Spay Day USA. First sponsored by Doris Day Animal League (DDAL) in 1995, Spay Day USA has enjoyed the support of hundreds of animal-protection organizations, animal shelters, veterinarians, and concerned individuals. The result of those combined efforts has been the unprecedented sterilization of more than 70,000 dogs and cats over a two-year period.

The HSUS and DDAL, in joining the two popular events within the month of February, will bring together thousands of shelters, organizations, and individuals to limit future generations of unwanted and homeless animals across the country. But our efforts during just one month aren't going to solve the problems of too many dogs and cats and not enough homes. It takes the concerted efforts of all of us who care for animals to work on this problem every day of every week of every month.

In each discussion we have with shelter visitors and volunteers, we should talk about spaying and neutering companion animals. In each letter and piece of correspondence mailed from our shelters, we should have a message about the need to surgically sterilize our dogs and cats.

Let's make raising the issue of spaying and neutering in every forum possible our top resolution for 1997 and one that we plan to keep. We'll chant it, shout it, sing it, whisper it, write it, hum it, think it, dream it, and work for it. And some day, the surplus of dogs and cats will be one of those issues that we talk about in terms of, "Remember when we used to have to beg people to have their companion animals spayed or neutered?"



Cartoon by James Bellora

numbers of dogs and cats in the United States. Several of the recommendations made at a conference in Denver in the summer of 1976—such as low-cost sterilization and differential licensing fees for altered and unaltered animals—were implemented by humane societies and animal care and control agencies in some areas of the country, and the numbers of homeless and unwanted animals in these areas began to decline.

*Martha Armstrong is HSUS Vice President for Companion Animals*

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# Owned Cats & Pet Overpopulation

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By Karen Johnson. Reprinted with permission from the October 1994 issue of *The Cat Fanciers' Almanac*.

## Cats vs dogs at the shelter:

•At the third largest shelter in the country, Santa Clara County, California, 36% of the animals handled are dogs, vs 64% cats.

•Euthanasia totals are 80% cats and 20% dogs.

## Litters produced by owned cats:

•A Massachusetts SPCA (MSPCA) study in 1991 shows 20% of cats have a litter prior to being altered.

•A National Pet Alliance (NPA) study of Santa Clara County in 1993 concluded 16% of female cats have a litter prior to being altered.

•A 1981 study of Las Vegas, out of Kansas State University, found 16% of the unspayed cats reproduced.

## Stray cats fed, but not claimed:

•The MSPCA study reported 87% of owned cats were already altered.

•The Las Vegas survey from KSU found 86% of owned cats were altered.

•A report from Tufts University showed 91.5% of owned female cats were spayed.

•The Santa Clara County survey found 86% of owned cats were altered.

## Death Rates:

•Dr. Roger Nassar, who conducted the Las Vegas study, concluded the average life span of the owned cats, based on respondents

answers, was 7.02 years.

•Ellen Perry Berkeley, in her book *Maverick Cats*, from various sources indicated the life span of feral cats to be 2-3 years.

•Also from *Maverick Cats*, we find only 33% of feral kittens are alive at age 1 year, 42% will die during the first two months of life.

## Litter Sizes:

•The average random-bred domestic cat can have 4.25 kittens, and 2.1 litters per year according to Dr. Niels Pederson in *Feline Husbandry*.

## Ratio of Sexes:

•50/50 in owned domestic cats.  
•35% female/65% male among feral cats, according to *Maverick Cats*.

## Owned cats which disappear from their homes:

•From the Las Vegas study, 2.7% of the cat population strayed each year.

•From the NPA study, 0.58% of owned cats strayed with no hint to their fate.

## Random bred vs pedigreed cats:

•According to Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc. (CFA) statistics, no more than 3% of the owned cat population are pedigreed.

Which group is having the most kittens?

Which group is sustaining itself through reproduction?

Which group is handled more by Animal Control and shelters?

## Food for thought:

If all stray and feral cats were caught and altered or killed, owned cats would have to produce an additional 22 litters per year/per thousand cats to sustain zero population growth. This is twice the current rate. To balance out the cat population, it is necessary to either increase ownership or reduce kittens being born to strays and ferals, or both. Programs which address these solutions should be encouraged.

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*Maverick Cats*, E.P. Berkeley. New England Press. 1982:26-27, 54-55.

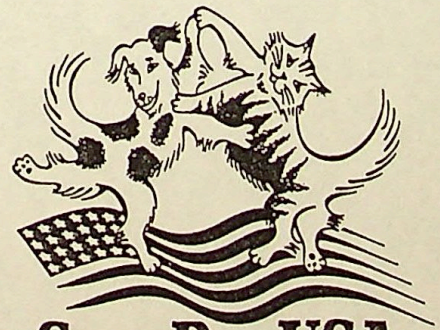
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*Companion Animal Demographics and Sterilization Status: Results from a Survey in Four Massachusetts Towns*. A.M. Manning, A. Rowan. *Anthrozoos* Vol V, No 3:192-201.

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**Spay Day USA**  
**FEBRUARY 28, 1995**

with soap and water immediately after handling pets and after cleaning cages, dish, or aquarium materials should not be used in or near the sink, where the bacteria are more likely to be spread during repair.

Because reptiles require special care, many shelters are seeing an increasing number of overburdened owners bringing animals to their shelter. Shelter managers and staff should learn the basics of reptile care by consulting a herpetologist or veterinarian who is experienced with exotic animals. Whether drafting adoption guidelines or selecting methods of euthanasia, shelter staff should make informed decisions to best serve animals and the community.

In the upcoming March 1997 issue of Animal Sheltering magazine for more information about caring for exotics in your shelter. ■

TA NICE  
LITTLE KITT...



ERIC SAVAGH  
ANIMAL SHELTERING  
MAGAZINE © 1997

TH URI!

## Pet Ownership by the Numbers

These statistics were taken from the 1996 Pet Owners Survey sponsored by the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association (APPPMA), a nonprofit association of pet supply manufacturers and importers. Figures are based on the U.S. census data estimate of 98.4 million households.

Percentage of households owning a pet.....	59 percent
Percentage of households owning cats.....	32 percent
Number of households owning cats.....	31.4 million
Number of cats kept as pets.....	66 million
Percentage of households owning dogs.....	37 percent
Number of households owning dogs.....	36.4 million
Number of dogs kept as pets.....	58 million
Percentage of owners who acquired cats from:	
Friend/Relative.....	54 percent
Strays.....	49 percent
Kitten of Own Cat.....	33 percent
Newspaper/Private Party.....	24 percent
Animal Shelter.....	12 percent
Pet Store.....	5 percent
Breeder.....	2 percent

Percentage of owners who acquired dogs from:	
Friend/Relative.....	41 percent
Breeder.....	29 percent
Newspaper/Private Party.....	23 percent
Animal Shelter.....	18 percent
Puppy of Own Dog.....	18 percent
Stray.....	9 percent
Pet Store.....	7 percent

Percentage of cat and dog owners who said they obtain information about their pets from animal shelters..... 8 percent

Percentage of cat owners who say they usually keep cats indoors during the day..... 60 percent

Percentage of dog owners who say they usually keep dogs indoors during the day..... 63 percent

Source: APPMA National Pet Owners Survey, 1996.  
Note: Some categories total greater than 100 percent because those surveyed were permitted to check more than one response, and because many respondents own more than one pet.

Percentage of cat owners who list the following as benefits of cat ownership:

Companionship, company.....	93 percent
Fun to watch.....	82 percent
Convenience, easy to maintain.....	69 percent
Good for children/teach responsibility.....	34 percent
Good for health.....	31 percent
Catches/keeps away mice/rodents.....	9 percent

Percentage of cat owners who list the following as drawbacks of cat ownership:

Finding care while away.....	47 percent
Shedding.....	43 percent
Odor.....	30 percent
Damage to furniture/carpet.....	26 percent
Cleaning up.....	23 percent
Cost for food, care, medicine.....	18 percent
Family member allergy.....	13 percent
Noise, meowing.....	9 percent
Bad around small children.....	5 percent
Too great a responsibility.....	4 percent

Percentage of dog owners who list the following as benefits of dog ownership:

Companionship, love, company.....	97 percent
Fun to watch.....	76 percent
Security.....	74 percent
Good for children/teach responsibility.....	42 percent
Good for health.....	40 percent

Percentage of dog owners who list the following as drawbacks of dog ownership:

Finding care while away.....	58 percent
Shedding.....	32 percent
Cost for food, care, medicine.....	26 percent
Noise, barking, whining.....	26 percent
Cleaning up, paper training.....	17 percent
Odor.....	15 percent
Destruction to furniture.....	11 percent
Destruction to property.....	10 percent
Too great a responsibility.....	5 percent
Bad around small children.....	5 percent
Family member allergy.....	5 percent
Bad around other pets.....	4 percent

Percentage of households owning freshwater fish..... 11 percent

Percentage of households owning birds..... 6 percent

Percentage of households owning small animals..... 5 percent

Percentage of households owning reptiles..... 3 percent



# Please Don't Breed Annie

*This classic letter was written many years ago by a shelter worker to a friend who was planning to breed her dog. It remains one of the most compelling arguments available for spaying and neutering.*

Dear Mary,

This letter is about the dog and cat overpopulation problem in general, and the question of your breeding "Annie" in particular. If you don't want to read it, for heaven's sake, throw it out.

I've been taught to despise people who use shock tactics and hysteria to make points—that if you have *good* reasons for what you say and present your thoughts clearly, people will listen. I don't know. I'm a different person than I was six months ago, before I began working at the humane society, and this change *wasn't* brought about by log-

nie"? Baby animals are fun. Birth itself is so amazing, and being part of it is exciting. Since I was a little kid, I wanted to breed dogs for just that reason: to bring beautiful pups into the world and to raise them with love. Why not?

Dogs never become independent. They are dependent on people *all* of their lives—perpetual two-year-olds. So, if you cause a puppy to be born, you are responsible for him for the rest of his life—yes, *even* after you find the puppy the "perfect" home. In a year, those people may move into an apartment where they can't have pets. Will you take the pup back until a new, permanent home is found? Are you willing to check up and make *sure* your pups are getting regular vet care?

What about the people you have in mind for the pups? You think they'd be good dog owners. Well, you'd be surprised! You probably won't believe me. I've met some nice people in the past few months, people I was sure would give good homes to favorite animals. A few of these animals came back to the shelter. "He got too big." "He won't bark." "He sheds." "We're moving." "He chews." (Of course! He's left alone 12 hours a day.) "We can't houstrain him." (He's only ten weeks old.) "We want to travel." "It's too expensive."

Or the animals *don't* come back, and we hear they've been hit by cars, caught in traps, poisoned, or shot. What are you letting those pups in for?

Thousands of dogs and cats are born *every hour* in this country. Do you think they all find nice homes? Many millions are euthanized in shelters each year. *Where do they all come from?* The shelters don't breed them, either by carelessness or intent. And we have to euthanize the

majority of them. Many people, when they have a litter to dispose of, take them off somewhere and dump them. Do you think six-week-old pups crawl off to good homes?

What I am saying to you is this: If you bring puppies into the world, you are probably—not possibly, but **PROBABLY**—letting at least half of them in for lives of suffering, or lives which end painfully. Dogs aren't like people, bad times don't give them more character. The suffering caused by carelessness, ignorance, and abandonment is meaningless and eventually destroys the animal.

Are you still with me? I'm zonked. My anger's gone. I hope you know that I was only angry *because of the animals* I've loved and seen mistreated, or loved and had to kill. I don't *want* to tell you horror stories, but I'm full of them and in *every* case a **PERSON** was the cause of the pain; people beyond my reach, people who leave trails of pain—dead, mutilated, abandoned animals. I see around one thousand animals each month. Each is an individual. Each one that we can't place is a failure, a separate failure. Some are neurotic or sick and it is best to euthanize them. But the affectionate, playful black kitten who purred and looked into my eyes as he died, the pups who lick my face as I feel their bodies sag; the patient, loving dogs, the gracious cats—I wish they were the ones who could write this letter to you. But they can't.

So, we store up their pain and their love and speak for them—angrily, I'm afraid, which *they* never would. They would speak with love and trust and puzzlement at being at the shelter, and ask *why* they have no person to love and be loved by, which is all they want.

It doesn't seem like much to ask. Please don't breed Annie.

Love, Daphne

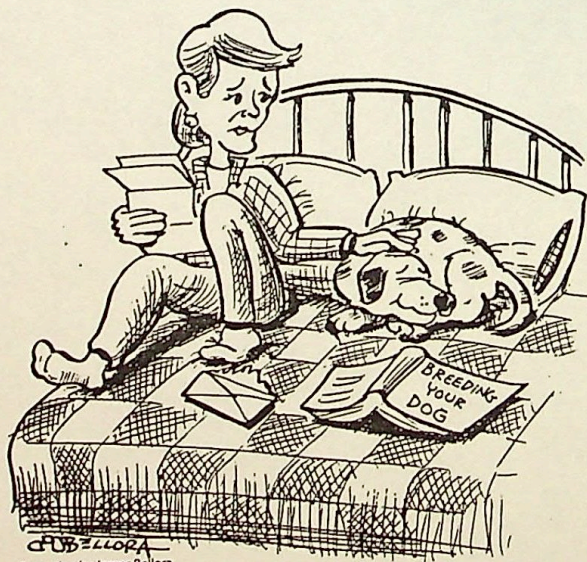


Illustration by James Bellora

ical arguments. It was brought about by experiences, a lot of them painful and some shocking. I don't want to hurt you, but if I'm to communicate my feelings, I'm going to *have* to tell you about some painful things.

Why shouldn't you breed "An-

*Adapted with permission from Shelter Life, the newsletter of the Humane Society of Huron Valley, Michigan.*

# fix the animals

Movie producer Samuel Goldwyn believed that people should "never make forecasts, especially about the future," but the

Progressive Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) has chucked

Goldwyn's counsel to the winds.

**THE MARIN HUMANE SOCIETY**  
171 Bel Marin Keys Boulevard  
Novato, CA 94947  
(415) 885-4621

TRANSFER TO FROM  
DOB SKINX OTHER BREED TYPE  
SEX CAT DOG  
COLOR  
MICROCHIP NO. 31459  
BARK

In an August letter to its 20,000 members, PAWS vowed to "end the killing of healthy and adoptable animals" in its Lynnwood, Washington, shelter within five years.

Considering the multitude of zeros attached to estimates of the surplus-animal problem, PAWS' optimism may seem surprising. Yet PAWS is not alone in this determination. Esther Mechler, founder and director of SPAY USA, which facilitates low-cost neuter-and-spay operations across the United States, believes that given a sufficient number of sufficiently motivated recruits, organizations dedicated to eliminating pet overpopulation can reach their goal by the year 2000. Like PAWS, Mechler defines the end of overpopulation as "the point at which there are good homes available for every healthy, adoptable animal that becomes homeless."

The resolve to end overpopulation is inspiring and refreshing, particularly when one considers the obsession with bean counting that dominates so many discussions of this topic. Do we credit, for example, the American Humane Association's (AHA) latest annual shelter study, which estimates that 12.1 million dogs and cats died in shelters in 1992? Or should we heed the voices muttering darkly that "the dimensions of overpopulation may have been exaggerated initially," and that 5.7 million is a more accurate approximation of the number of animals killed in shelters each year?

Without putting too fine a point on the discussion, one is obliged to note that the 5.7 million guesstimate was derived in a most curious manner. The guesstimator appropriated shelter-kill data originally collected by other observers in eight or nine states. Then he said: Trust me, the populations of those states collectively mirror the population of the entire country. Therefore, there are 5.7 million animals killed in shelters annually.

The trouble with that sort of conjuring, as any elementary text in statistics will tell you, is that "the investigator is privileged to draw statistical inferences only to those populations from which he has drawn random samples." Thus, if your sample was taken in eight or nine states, you are extrapolating from the hip if you use that data to make pronouncements about the country at large. What's more, dramatically low guesstimates of the surplus-animal population are quoted eagerly by animal breeders, such as the one



Jody Boyman

writing who wrote in the American Kennel Club's *Gazette* "that the public is being seduced by inflated figures on animal overpopulation." Talk about giving aid and comfort to the enemy.

Depending on who is calling the tune, animal-kill statistics are used to beat the drum for sterner population-control measures or to beat the rap for not taking any action whatsoever. But all this mucking about with numbers is unfortunate. The precise number of animals killed each year for want of good homes does not mean scat to an animal on its way to the euthanasia room. Furthermore, as former Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill maintained, "All politics is local politics." And all animal-population control is local population control. Persons inclined to help end overpopulation need only know how many healthy, adoptable animals their local shelters put to sleep last year. Unless that figure is a single digit, there is plenty of work that needs to be done. And there is no better time than the present to begin: to join forces with whoever is working to get an ordinance passed or to establish a low-cost neuter-spay program. There is no time like now to volunteer to serve as a foster parent for an animal or two at the nearest shelter or to trap and sterilize that stray cat you have been feeding. Now is the time to help out with educational efforts, rescue efforts, fund-raising efforts, or any of a number of efforts being made to solve the overpopulation problem. For there exists currently in many segments of the animal-protection community a heightened dedication to eliminating pet overpopulation. There also exists an arsenal of techniques equal to the task: education, low-cost neuter-and-spay

programs, differential licensing, mandatory neuter-and-spay ordinances, cat licensing, cat-confinement laws, breeding-control legislation, trap-and-release programs, breeding moratoria, and the neutering and spaying of every animal that leaves an animal shelter.

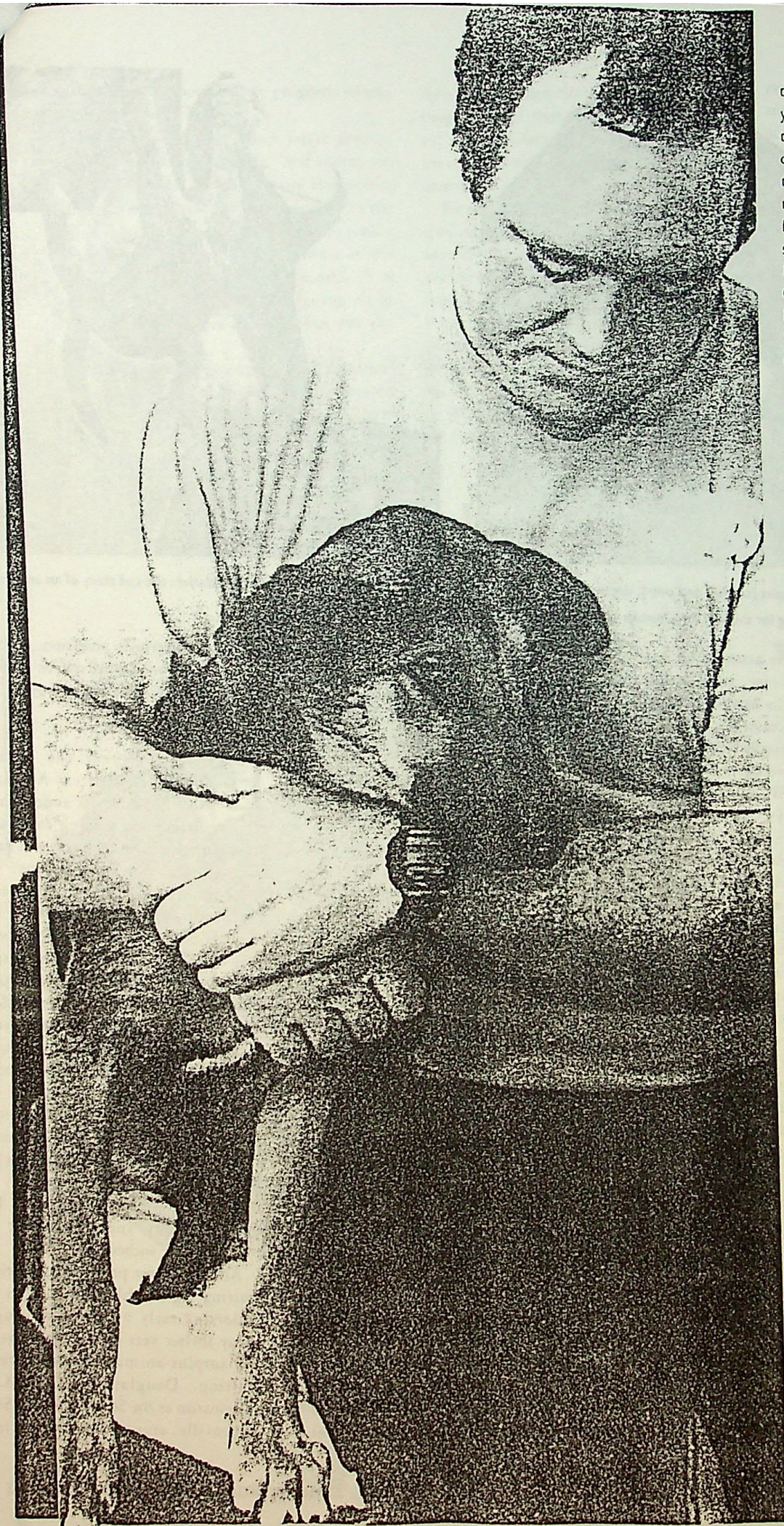
The relative importance of these variables in any equation designed to solve pet overpopulation will depend on the sources of overpopulation in the community where that equation is applied. Ideally, information regarding the sources of overpopulation should be gathered before solutions are proposed, but existing research points to the kinds of approaches that might be tried.

A national survey conducted by Penn & Schoen Associates for the Humane Society of the United States in November 1992 revealed that more than two out of five dogs in this country are not altered, while nearly one out of five cats is still intact. The margin of error for this survey was +/- 3.5 percent. The Penn & Schoen survey also revealed that 23 percent of the persons who own at least one unaltered dog--and 31 percent of all cat owners--do not think neutering or spaying is necessary.

Worse yet, a survey of Massachusetts residents conducted for the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA) in October 1991 revealed that only 42 percent of cat owners and 39 percent of dog owners believe pet overpopulation exists. (The margin of error for this survey was +/- 5 percent.) Obviously, people still have to be educated about the reality of pet overpopulation and the importance of neutering and spaying as solutions to the problem. Yet MSPCA had saturated the Bay State with news releases, print ads, public service announcements, radio jingles, posters, mass-transit ads, and billboards preaching the neuter-spay gospel. In addition, the Alliance for Animals, an animal-rights group, has been working door-to-door in Boston's housing projects since 1988, talking up the need for sterilizing animals and making affordable services available to some of the least affluent pet owners in the city. Yet if so many people have gotten education, why have so few gotten religion?

One suspects that universal education will not inspire universal virtue. That is why more compulsory approaches have been considered by an increasing number of municipalities since the introduction of

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the San Mateo, California, ordinance 10 years ago, an introduction accompanied the public euthanasia of five cats and dogs. Following these shots set the world--one San Mateo su traveling in Europe caught the footage on CNN in West Ge several other municipalities, in King County, Washington; Montgomery County, Maryland; and Denver. Other cities have adopted similar legislative measures. San Mateo's legislation requires all animals over a certain age, generally six months, to be neutered or spayed. It further requires that persons who insist on keeping their animals unaltered get a license and pay a fee. The ordinance also legislates other behavior rules and promotes responsible pet ownership.

Thus far, data collected from several municipalities where legislation has been enacted is not sufficient to allow a definitive assessment of the impact of such ordinances. Yet legislation makes intuitive sense, especially in places like San Mateo, where a low-cost, no-kill clinic, an expansive humane education effort, dog-training and socialization classes, an animal care hotline, and the work of humane volunteers had reduced the number of animals killed annually by 75 percent during the 1970s but had been unable to make further progress during the 1980s.

Breeding-control legislation requires people to pay a fee for the privilege of breeding animals. In practical sense, too. There is a social cost run up by animal shelters whose puppies and kittens come to shelter animals for homes, then many healthy shelter animals are euthanized at someone else's expense. Moreover, purebred animals of many breeds are euthanized at taxpayers' expense. An insidious form of taxation, where representation is levied on the general population, is plus of the general population. It is not breed animals by the 10 percent that does.

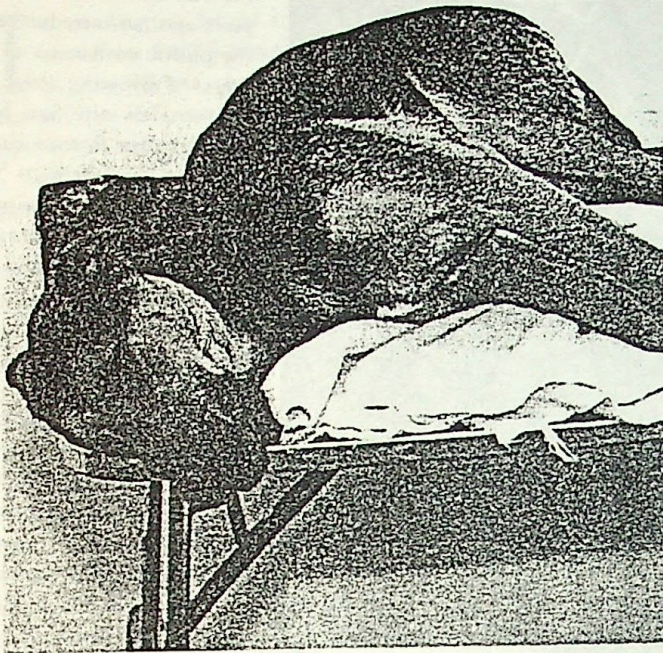
**A**nother recently introduced approach to animal overpopulation is the trap-and-release program, in which animals are trapped, tested for communicable diseases, treated if necessary, altered, and then released in their home territories, where they are subsequently captured by human activity.

Joey Boyman

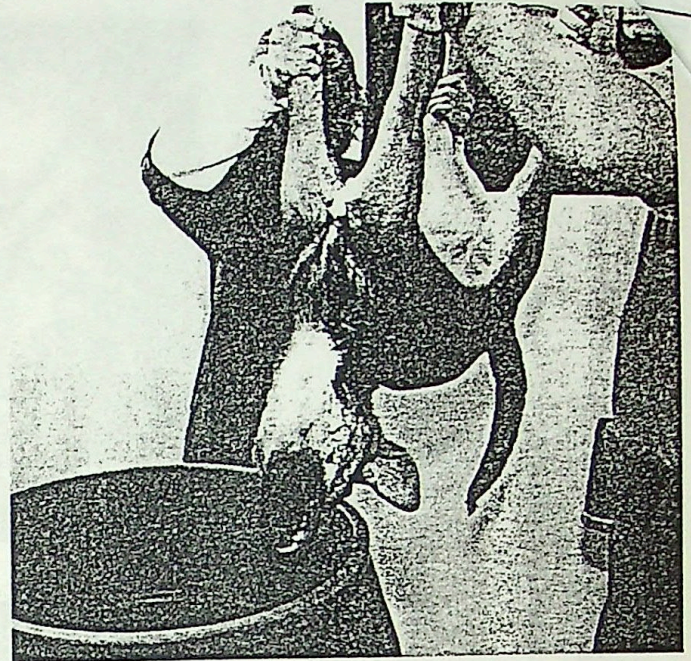
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Judy Boyman



Judy Boyman

This series of four photographs (see left and over), document the tragic consequences of companion animal overpopulation: the sad story of an unnamed and unwanted dog, experiencing for the last time human companionship before being euthanised.

date, no major humane association has endorsed trap and release, says Louise Holton, co-founder of the Maryland-based Alley Cat Allies, this country's foremost proponent of trap and release. Holton does point out that "we have been invited to speak at AHA's and MSPCA's conventions this year," and she says that increasing numbers of people are inquiring about how to start trap-and-release programs.

Holton calls trap and release "the most humane and effective way of controlling the feral-cat population." Nevertheless, many members of the humane community refer to trap and release as "subsidized abandonment." They argue that trapped-and-released cats are still at the mercy of automobiles, the elements, predatory animals, bullying citizens, and all the other perils that shorten the life spans of outdoor cats. And they remind us that sick cats in a colony must be retrapped and taken to a veterinarian and that all members of a colony must be retrapped annually for a physical examinations and booster shots.

Both pro- and anti-trapping sides agree that people need to be educated about the folly of simply feeding stray cats, a kindness exercised by 24 percent of the cat and dog owning-respondents to the Penn & Schoen survey. That 24 percent translates into roughly 15.3 million well-intentioned people who are feeding the red for pet-overpopulation problem. These 15.3 million cat lovers, by a conservative

estimate based on the number of cats they reported feeding, are tending to at least 35.9 million feral cats. Fortunately, some ordinances make anyone who feeds a stray animal for 30 days the owner of that animal, and such ordinances subject that person to the regulations by which all pet owners are governed.

Ironically, animal shelters have been accused of being part of the pet-overpopulation problem as well as part of its solution. Therefore, during the last 16 years more and more shelters have begun neutering or spaying all animals--even those as young as eight weeks old--before allowing their new owners to take them home. The rationale for this practice is simple: If every animal adopted out by a shelter is incapable of reproducing, shelter officials can rest assured they are not contributing to the pet-overpopulation problem. Conversely, shelter officials who rely on the tried-but-uncrue neuter-spay agreement cannot rest so assuredly. Too many people who sign neuter-spay agreements fail to honor them--even if the adopters have put up a neuter-spay fee at the time of adoption.

With certitude to recommend it, early sterilization appears to be the insurance policy shelters have been seeking in the battle against pet overpopulation. But even though the concept and technique of early neutering and spaying are roughly 25 years old, advocates of these procedures have been paddling against the current in

the river of veterinary tradition, which says that sterilization should not be performed before an animal is six months old.

Earlier this year the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) added its endorsement of early neutering and spaying to those that had been voiced already by several national animal-protection organizations. These endorsements were made in response to the effectiveness of early sterilization, not in response to the questions raised about its long-term effects. Among the suspected effects--which would not become apparent until an animal reached its middle or senior years--are urinary incontinence, urinary-tract infections, atrophic vaginitis, and increased growth of the long bones in the legs.

"The procedure is not a problem," says Gary Patronek, V.M.D., former director of the Chester County Animal Shelter in West Chester, Pennsylvania. "The problem is the lack of long-term, follow-up data that indicates that these procedures are without risk."

Although most private veterinarians are waiting for reliable information before endorsing early neuter-spay programs, many shelter vets believe the severity of the surplus-animal problem precludes waiting. Douglas Seif, D.V.M., staff veterinarian at the South Carolina SPCA in Greenville, argues that the decision to

adopt an early neuter-spay program hinges on a question of balance.

"In private practice when you're dealing with an individual animal," Seif continues, "you have to be absolutely sure that you're doing what is best for that animal. In the shelter situation you have to judge that individual against a background of the entire animal population in the area. You have to ask yourself what is going to be best not for the individual but for the whole community.

"There are unproven assertions that there might be some long-term detriments involved with early neutering and spaying," says Seif, "but we know there are

direct health benefits to early neuter-spay programs and that they will cut down on pet overpopulation. So it's a case of the greatest good for the greatest number of animals."

For all its appeal, early neutering and spaying will eliminate only those surplus animals produced by animals coming from shelters, the source of 10 percent of the nation's pets according to the Penn & Schoen survey. And that reduction will occur only if all shelters adopt early sterilization, which may be beyond some shelters' budgets.

When efforts to reduce the surplus-animal population began more than 20

years ago, establishing low-cost neuter-spay clinics was among the first of business. That initiative, which met with fervent opposition from the veterinary community at first, has been successful, and it continues today. The availability of low-cost—and in many cases free—sterilization is such that 10 percent of the dog owners in the Schoen survey and 11 percent of cat owners said their animals were sterilized because the procedure was expensive.

By applying those percentages to ownership estimates from the AHA 1992 survey, one calculates that 1.1 million of the nation's 34.6 million dog owners and 3.2 million of the 29.2 million cat owners need financial assistance in order to have their animals neutered or spayed. Thus, it is clear that despite the success of the low-cost neuter-spay programs, there is still work to be done in the

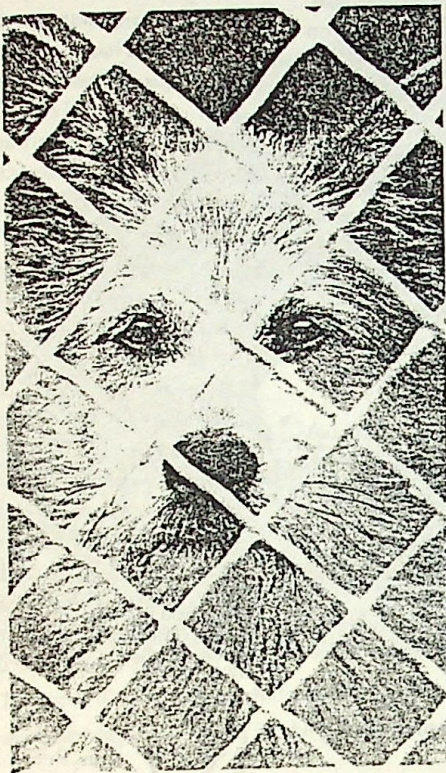


When Peter Singer put *Animal Liberation* in 1975, the event often credited with launching the animal rights movement in this country—there was little awareness of pet overpopulation among the general populace and perhaps even less among animal rights advocates. Singer does not mention the problem, nor does he discuss the elimination of pet overpopulation as one of the causes with which the animal rights movement soon was involved. In the latter end of the last decade, the battle against pet overpopulation was fought largely by animal shelter personnel. Whether right or wrong, a focus on animal welfare rather than animal rights was the result. In fact, when the animal rights movement did take notice of the shelter problem, it was usually to complain that the shelters were killing so many animals.

In 1988 Mitchell Fox, an animal rights director at PAWS, declared that the animal rights movement would "continue to lack credibility" until it confronted the problem of pet overpopulation.

"Before San Mateo, there had been a certain detente between animal rights protectors on the one hand and animal overpopulation," says Fox. "Throughout most of the 1980s, animal rights people steered away from the issue because it wasn't something to which they could apply their ideology." What they could not apply was unlike the meat, fur, and v

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## Dodge Shelter-assistance Program

Since 1985 the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation has given more than \$1 million to alleviate pet overpopulation and animal suffering in its home state of New Jersey. The foundation was launched in 1974 with a \$60-million endowment from the estate of Mrs. Dodge. Today, with assets tripled despite \$100 million in grants disbursed, giving is generally limited to the arts, education, public issues, animal protection, and local projects. The foundation has distributed more than \$9 million (400 grants) to animal protection in areas ranging from humane education to laboratory and farm animal welfare to species conservation to pet overpopulation.

Geraldine R. Dodge was the only daughter of Standard Oil President William Rockefeller. When she married Marcellus Hartley Dodge, president of Remington Arms, newspapers described them as the wealthiest couple in America. Dodge kept and bred hundreds of dogs on whom she doted. But in 1958 she left the pomp and ceremony of "the fancy" for rescue work, turning her attention to St. Hubert's Giralda, the animal shelter she founded on her property. She recruited Ed Sayres, her professional dog handler, to run the shelter. Sayres also was the manager of her estate—which included 370 acres, 65 employees, 100 dogs, a herd of deer, a corral of horses, and a bird sanctuary. Before Dodge died in 1973 at the age of 91, she named Sayres to the board of her foundation. She separately endowed St. Hubert's Giralda, which is the state's leading shelter and is now directed by Ed Sayres, Jr.

When the Dodge foundation began, the board decided to channel its animal protection funding primarily to national groups working for systemic change. But after a few years, Sayres, Sr., wanted to do something "with a direct effect on the day-to-day, local animal-control and welfare problems." He found an ally in Vera DuMont, assistant to the foundation's director. DuMont remembers, "We kept getting letters from local shelters with their heartrending stories: no money, no staff, thousands of animals to take care of." It

was her job to write back and say thanks but no thanks.

Given the priorities of DuMont and Sayres, Sr., the New Jersey Animal Assistance Program was created. From the beginning this program of annual giving had loftier goals than merely doling out money. It sought to unify shelters, offer guidance, impart confidence, raise standards, and inspire excellence.

The program's first invitational letter went out to animal shelters across New Jersey in 1985, encouraging them to apply for up to \$10,000. DuMont recalls the six responses that came back as being "ill defined, poorly written, with vague goals and little hope, by desperate people." All were funded.

Soon Program Consultant Ed Sayres, Jr., was shuttling around the state helping shelters with needs assessments and grant writing. Workshops were conducted, and frequently shelter personnel from the same county not only met one another but learned of each other's existence for the first time.

The nine-year-old NJAAP has now distributed 160 grants totalling more than \$1 million to 54 groups. A few years ago a program coordinator was hired to oversee the effort year-round. An advisory board, composed mostly of shelter people who have shown ingenuity with past grants, sets minimum shelter standards for applicants and yearly giving themes. And through Ed Sayres, Jr., and St. Hubert's, the NJAAP conducts monthly workshops across the state on animal care, humane education, and shelter management. The goal of creating a network of shelters, each of which is a specialist in one area, then sharing that information has become a reality. With an 80-percent-plus acceptance rate compared to 30 percent for the rest of Dodge funding, the program continues to welcome even more shelters to the Dodge family.

**Mitchell Fox**

Animal Issues Director at PAWS

The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation can be contacted at 163 Madison Ave., Box 1239, Morristown, NJ 07962 (201) 540-8443

industries, pet overpopulation did not have perpetrators that were easily demonized.

The legislative initiatives in San Mateo and in other parts of the country are a strategy with which animal rights people can identify, says Fox, who attributes "much of the resurgence of interest in eliminating pet overpopulation to the efforts of people trained in animal rights. They're more impatient. They're more willing to step up to a battle. They're more ready to endure whatever hell may come from their actions. Look what they've done with fur and product testing. In a decade they've put those subjects on the map."

It remains to be seen whether animal rights activists' belated involvement with pet overpopulation will have the same impact as it did on fur wearing and cosmetics testing. Meanwhile, it is 1999 minus five years and counting in PAWS' campaign to eliminate the killing of healthy, adoptable animals in its shelter. Will we sit on the sidelines counting beans, or will we make that dedication our New Year's resolution, too?

This article was made possible by a grant from the William and Charlotte Parks Foundation.

**Phil Maggitti**

Phil Maggitti's latest book is *Guide to a Well-behaved Cat* (Barron's Educational Series, 1993.)

**‘It’s too expensive to have my pet spayed or neutered.’** The cost for spaying and neutering depends on the sex of the animal, its size and age, your veterinarian’s fees, and a number of other variables. Some communities have low-cost options, and some veterinarians offer discounts for special circumstances. But whatever the actual price, spay or neuter surgery is a one-time cost and relatively small when compared to all the benefits. It’s also a small price to pay for the health of your pet and to prevent more unwanted animals.

## HOW YOU CAN “Be a P.A.L.” TO YOUR PET

- **Prevent A Litter.** Spay or neuter your pet.
- **Provide A Leash.** Don’t allow your dog to run loose and keep your cat inside.
- **Purchase A License.** If your pet does get lost, identification can be its ticket home.
- **Pet A Lot.** Your pet needs *you*. Of course, you must provide good food, water, shelter, and veterinary care—but that’s not enough. Your dog or cat needs your affection, your attention, your time, and your companionship.

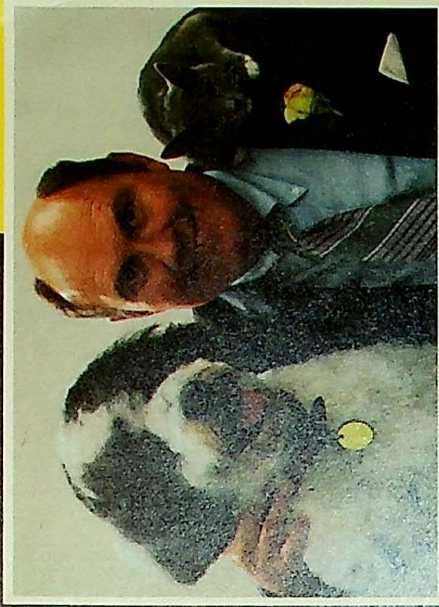
If you’re thinking about adding a pet to your family, make sure you’ve thought about all the responsibilities as well as the benefits, then visit your local animal shelter. There are millions of dogs and cats out there, just waiting for a pal like you.

## ANOTHER WAY YOU CAN HELP

If you’re not already a member of The Humane Society of the United States, please consider joining. Your \$10.00 annual membership fee is tax-deductible (to the extent allowed by law) and will allow us to help more animals. For more information, write to:

The Humane Society of the United States  
2100 L Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037

*On the cover: Television personality Willard Scott urges everyone to “Be a P.A.L.—Prevent A Litter.” (Peter Garfield photo)*



# PREVENT A LITTER

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

# Be a P.A.L.



The Humane Society of the United States  
2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037

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## WHEN THERE'S JUST TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING...

there's a problem. In the case of dogs and cats, it's a problem of pet overpopulation. Each year, more than twelve million dogs and cats, puppies and kittens, are turned in to animal shelters around the country. Some are lost, some are abandoned, some are unwanted, most are the result of irresponsible ownership and uncontrolled breeding. Sadly, nearly eight million of those animals have to be euthanized because there aren't enough good homes for all of them.

## PET OVERPOPULATION IS A PROBLEM YOU CAN HELP SOLVE...

by being a responsible pet owner, as well as a caring and concerned citizen. Here are some of the things you can do:

- Prevent a litter by having your pet spayed or neutered.
- Don't let your pet run loose. Keeping your pet at home can help prevent unwanted breeding and protect your pet from getting lost or stolen.
- Spread the "Be a P.A.L.—Prevent A Litter" message to friends, family, neighbors, organizations, and so on. People must become aware of the problem before they can be expected to help with the solutions. (For more information about other "Be a P.A.L.—Prevent A Litter" materials that can help educate others, write to The HSUS at the address on the back of this brochure.)

## PREVENT A LITTER—IT'S GOOD FOR YOUR PET

- Spayed and neutered dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives.
- Spaying female dogs and cats eliminates the possibility of uterine or ovarian cancer and greatly reduces the incidence of breast cancer.

- Neutering male dogs and cats reduces the incidence of prostate cancer.
- Neutered animals are less likely to roam and fight.

## PREVENT A LITTER—IT'S GOOD FOR YOU

- Spayed and neutered pets are better, more affectionate companions.
- Neutered cats are less likely to spray and mark territory.
- Spaying a female dog or cat eliminates its heat cycle, which can last twenty-one days, twice a year, in dogs, and anywhere from three to fifteen days, three or more times a year, in cats. Females in heat often cry incessantly, show nervous behavior, and attract unwanted male animals.
- Spayed and neutered pets are less likely to bite. Unaltered animals often exhibit more behavior and temperament problems than those that have been spayed or neutered.

## PREVENT A LITTER—IT'S GOOD FOR THE COMMUNITY

Communities spend millions of dollars to control and eliminate unwanted animals. Irresponsible breeding contributes to the problem of dog bites and attacks. Animal shelters are overburdened with surplus animals. Some communities have developed and implemented good programs that work to promote pet sterilization and responsible pet ownership. Such programs may include low-cost spay/neuter options, higher license fees for unaltered animals, and public education. In Los Angeles, one such program reduced the numbers of cats and dogs handled by city animal shelters from 145,000 to 81,000 in just ten years.

## SPAY AND NEUTER: EXCUSES, MYTHS...AND THE FACTS

"My pet will get fat and lazy." The truth is that pets get fat and lazy if their owners feed them too much and don't give them enough exercise.

"It's better to have one litter first." There is no medical evidence that having a litter is good for your pet. In fact, the evidence indicates that females spayed before their first heat, at about six months, are healthier. Males can be neutered from about six months on. It's a good idea to check with your veterinarian about your own animals.

"But my pet is a purebred." So are at least one-fourth of the animals brought to animal shelters around the country. There are just too many dogs and cats—mixed breed *and* purebred.

"I'll find good homes for all the puppies and kittens." The fact that shelters have to euthanize about 80 percent of the animals they take in indicates that there are not enough homes to go around. Even if you could find homes for the litter your pet produces, those are homes that will no longer be available for any of the millions of animals already born.

"I want my dog to be protective." Spaying or neutering does not affect a dog's natural instincts to protect its home and family.

"My children should experience the miracle of birth." Even if your children are able to see your pet give birth—which is unlikely, since it usually occurs at night and in seclusion—the lesson you will really be teaching is that animals can be created and discarded as it suits us. Instead, you should explain to your children that the real miracle is life and that preventing births of some pets can save the lives of others.

"But my dog (or cat) is so special, I want a pup (or kitten) just like her." Your dog or cat may be a great pet. But that doesn't mean you'll get a carbon copy. Professional animal breeders who follow generations of bloodlines can't guarantee they will get just what they want out of a particular litter. Your chances are even slimmer. In fact, you could get an entire litter of puppies or kittens with all of your pet's (and its mate's) worst characteristics.

## Pet Adoption and the Overpopulation Problem

Each one of us can help stop the tragedy of too many pets by taking three simple steps:

**1** Adopt your next companion animal from a shelter so no more healthy animals have to die simply because there aren't enough homes for them all.

**2** Have all of your pets spayed or neutered. Preventing more unnecessary births is critical to breaking the overpopulation cycle.

**3** Be a responsible pet owner. Don't let your pets roam free and protect them with current identification tags.



The Humane Society of the United States  
2100 L Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20037

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Choose A Pal For Life



## Adopt One . . . Choose a Pet for Life

In virtually every community across the United States, public and private animal shelters are filled with dogs and cats. Some are lost pets whose owners can't be found. Others are pets whose owners can no longer keep them. There are puppies, kittens, older animals, mixed breeds, and purebreds. They all have at least one thing in common. Each is hoping for a permanent and loving home.

Unfortunately, for most of these animals, there will be no new home. Why? The answer is simple: not enough people choose to adopt their animal companions from a shelter.

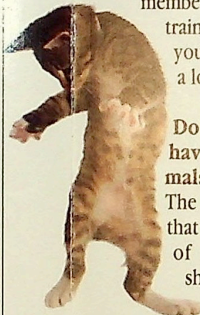
The solution to this tragic problem starts with you. When you're ready to add a cat or dog to your family, visit your local animal shelter. Until there are no more healthy animals dying in shelters . . . adopt one.



## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ADOPTING

### Are dogs and cats in shelters healthy and well-adjusted?

Most shelters make every effort to screen animals for serious health and behavior problems. Even with the best-behaved animal, however, you should expect to go through a period of adjustment as your pet becomes used to a new home, family, and routine. No animal, no matter where it comes from, is problem-free or comes with a health and behavior guarantee, but if you're prepared to provide your new family member with some time, training, and patience, your reward will be a loving companion.



### Do shelters really have purebred animals for adoption?

The HSUS estimates that about 25 percent of the animals in shelters nationwide are purebred. If

you're interested in a specific breed, ask if your local shelter keeps a waiting list of people interested in purebred animals. Even if it does not, you may be able to find an animal that has traits that are similar to those of the breed you have in mind.

### Aren't all shelter animals just "secondhand" pets?

Many shelter animals are puppies and kittens that will be starting their lives as companions. Older dogs and cats may have had previous owners. You may have to re-educate these animals to some degree. On the other hand, they may

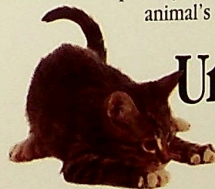


have already been exposed to house-breaking and obedience training. Remember, too, that companion animals are remarkably adaptable and have a boundless capacity for love. Just because they lived with someone else first doesn't mean they wouldn't make a wonderful companion for you!

### Is it difficult to adopt from a shelter?

Every shelter has its own policies for approving adoptions.

The best adoption programs are designed to ensure that each animal is placed with a responsible person, one prepared to make a lifelong commitment, and to avoid the kinds of problems that may have caused the animal to be brought to the shelter. An important part of the process is to match the life-style and needs of the adopter with the individual dog or cat. If the screening process occasionally seems overly strict, try to remember that the shelter's first priority is to protect the animal's best interests.



### Are there requirements following the adoption of a dog or cat?

Most shelters require adopted animals to be spayed or neutered, either before they leave the shelter or within a specified period of time afterward. Following your pet's adoption, you will be responsible for providing regular veterinary care and for ensuring that your dog or cat is properly housed. Having a companion animal brings rewards—and responsibilities. Be sure your dog or cat always wears a collar with an identification tag. Provide nutritious food and fresh water for your pet. Make time for exercise, training, and play. Finally, enjoy your new life with your new best friend!



### What's the best way to find an animal shelter?

The easiest place to start is your phone book. Animal shelters may be called by a variety of names, so look in the yellow pages under such listings as "animal shelter," "humane society," or "animal control." Public animal-control departments will probably be listed under the city or county agency responsible for lost and unwanted animals. Shelter policies and procedures may vary, but all will have animals waiting for loving homes.

# Until There Are None, Adopt One

# JUST ONE LITTER



RACIELLA LASSERE DE CHAPPIARD

*Cindy forgot that the apartment repairman was coming to fix her sliding glass door that day. She forgot to confine her seven-month-old kitten in the bedroom. When she got home from*

*work, there Kali was, waiting for her outside under a pine tree. "Thank goodness you're okay," she sighed.*

*A week or so later, the kitten is putting on weight. She is pregnant. What a disappointment, Cindy thinks. She had been waiting for Kali to go through one heat cycle before she had her spayed—she'd always heard that was best. But Cindy isn't worried about finding homes for the kittens. She will just take them into the clothing store where she works and put them in the window.*

Cats have surpassed dogs as the most popular pets in the United States, with 30.6 million households owning cats. As a result of this surge in interest, the number of cats entering animal shelters has also dramatically increased.

Given the rate at which cats reproduce, it becomes clear why there are so many homeless cats. For example, if Cindy's cat were allowed to breed at will, it could be the source of 420,000 cats in only seven years. But 420,000 is not the root of the pet-overpopulation problem. Kali's one litter is.

*Well, the kittens are a real success. All 4 find good homes in one week. Cindy decides to get her cat spayed, but she's in no hurry. After all, Kali never*

*goes out.*

*Six months later, Kali's kittens are all in homes and have matured. The striped female who went to the mother with two children is no longer kitten-cute, and the kids don't pay as much attention to her anymore. She is left outside and out of the way most of the time. When she delivers 5 kittens, the family puts a free-kitten ad in the paper. Luckily, a man is interested in all 5. He says he wants to use them as barn cats on his property. In fact, he sells the kittens to a local dealer, who sells them to a research facility. The family does not have the mother cat spayed.*

Every day, the newspapers are filled with classified "free pet" ads. Many of the people seeking to give away litters of puppies and kittens find success—they find "good" homes for each one in their litter. They think the book is closed once the last puppy or kitten leaves with its new owner, that the problem is solved. It isn't.

In a recent case in DeKalb County, Georgia, a man was convicted of torturing and killing 77 cats. He admitted to torturing the felines and later photographing their remains. He kept detailed records of each cat's acquisition, appearance, behavior, and treatment in a log he dubbed "TCJHTD"—"This Cat Just Had To Die." This man obtained cats through newspaper ads for free kittens.

*The family that took the black male kitten say he's a great cat. They let him out periodically, especially since it's summer. Now that the cat is eight months old and sexually active, he spends a great deal of time roaming the neighborhood looking for receptive females. One day his excursions take him across a highway, where a car strikes him. He is left to die near*

BY KATE  
RINDY  
AND  
RHONDA  
LUCAS DONALD

Many of us take for granted the facts of pet overpopulation, but others may not be completely aware of the devastating consequences of a single unplanned litter of puppies or kittens. If you are overpopulation "litter-ate," we urge you to pass along this article to someone who could benefit from it; if you are not, we urge you to take heed.

Many of the people seeking to give away litters of puppies and kittens . . . think the book is closed once the last puppy or kitten leaves with its new owner.

*the median. The family discovers their dead pet, and the parents tell their crying children that these things happen and that they'll get another cat. In his short life, this cat fathers 8 litters—50 kittens.*

*The young woman who took the black female kitten lives in a no-pets apartment. When her landlord discovers the cat, he orders her to get rid of her pet or be evicted. Unable to move and unable to find anyone to take a mostly grown cat, she takes the animal to the outskirts of town and abandons her. In the year and a half before this cat dies of distemper, she has 4 litters of feral kittens.*

*The young man who adopted the striped female has her spayed when she turns six months old and keeps her indoors always. She will be a healthy, wonderful companion for him for sixteen years.*

Fifteen months after Kali first became pregnant, 83 kittens have been born. Cindy found "good" homes for Kali's first 4 kittens, but she didn't consider the other 79. The sad fact is, every litter, planned or accidental, adds to pet overpopulation. The cycle must stop before it starts—before that one litter.

*Jack and Susie bought a male Akita puppy from a large pet-store chain. Of course, he came complete with AKC papers registering him as a purebred. They name him Bear, and as he grows and matures sexually, Susie can barely handle his 100-plus pounds. He is erratic, seems preoccupied, and won't listen to her when they're outside. She has lost control of him six times already, and he ran loose for several hours each time before coming home.*

*Jack takes Bear to a dog trainer, who advises him to neuter the dog. Neutering would make Bear manageable, reduce his inclination to run off, and help prevent him from becoming aggressive.*

*But Jack wants to use Bear as a stud dog. He paid \$500 for Bear, not to mention the trips to the vet for shots, checkups, and even vitamins. Surely, the puppies should bring in a lot of money! Somehow, though, he never arranges to stand Bear as a stud; meantime, the dog is getting more and more difficult to handle.*

The American Kennel Club (AKC) reports that it has 36 million purebred dogs registered in its studbook. In 1989 alone, the AKC registered more than 1 million dogs

and 550,300 litters. Although there is a demand for purebred dogs, purebred pets are not immune to the whims of people who see animals as disposable commodities.

The HSUS estimates that as many as 25 percent of the animals entering shelters each year are purebreds. One look through the classified ads reveals how many free pets are registered or come with papers. Many people believe that breeding their purebred pet would be profitable. After all, they paid hundreds of dollars for their pet. (In truth, the reason "mall pets" cost so much is that a large part of the purchase price goes to paying the hefty rent the pet shop pays the mall for its prime location.)

In reality, the average "backyard" breeder may sell only half of the litter and end up giving away the rest. If the breeder has provided proper veterinary care to all of the animals, his or her profit margin is usually slim or nonexistent. There may be a dog or cat, even a purebred, for every home in America, but there is not a home for every available dog and cat.

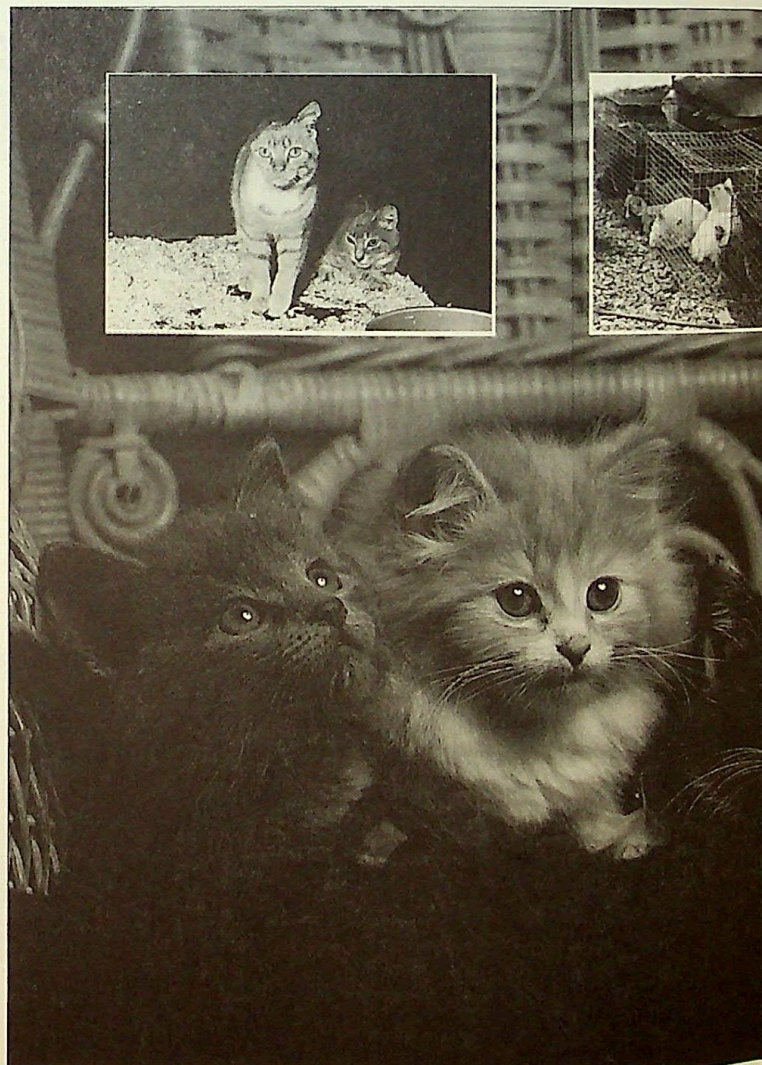
*One day, Susie is walking Bear in a park when they encounter a large male shepherd. Bear lunges, breaking his lead, and attacks the other dog. Susie tries to separate the dogs and is bitten by*

***The charm of kittens can turn to suffering, caused by pet owners who allow their animals to breed indiscriminately. Insets, left and center: unwanted animals are often bought at auction for use as laboratory-research subjects, or, right: euthanized in shelters nationwide.***

*Bear. The police finally stop the fight. Each dog has cuts and bite wounds but is otherwise okay.*

*Jack decides to have Bear neutered. He is astonished at how much better behaved Bear becomes and how much happier the dog is. Unfortunately, Bear manages to father 6 litters of puppies before his surgery.*

*The female dogs Bear impregnated have 34 puppies among them. Some of these puppies inherit their father's aggressiveness and pose problems to people in the neighborhood. One man, tired of the dogs coming into his yard, manages to shoot one of them. Two more die when they eat rat poison. Four are killed by cars. Animal-control officers capture 7 more of these nuisance animals and must euthanize them because they are ill or unadoptable. One of*



the dog owners recognizes the size and strength of the puppies and sells his 4 to a dogfighter. One pet owner takes his dog's 4 puppies to the animal shelter and then has his dog spayed. Of the 34 puppies Bear fathers, 22 father or give birth to 156 more puppies.

Pet overpopulation is not a new issue to most people. Since the 1960s, groups such as The HSUS have worked to inform people of the problem of too many pets and not enough homes and to encourage education, sterilization, and legislation to protect animals and address pet overpopulation.

But "pet overpopulation" may seem abstract to the average person who just has one litter on his hands. One—or even a handful—of animals from one person does not seem like an insurmountable problem.

With a human population already saturated with pets and ten or twenty people bringing litters into each animal shelter daily, the picture becomes clearer.

Pet overpopulation comes from many sources. It comes from people who breed animals intentionally for profit or hobby. While it is true that there will always be a market for purebred animals, that market should be filled by conscientious breeders who are committed to improving their animals' breed in terms of genetics, behavior, and temperament, as well as desirable color, size, and shape. Pet overpopulation comes from puppy mills, those cruel, often horrendous breeding farms that supply pet-store animals. Pet overpopulation comes from the animals abandoned and left to fend for themselves, reproducing litter after litter.

Pet overpopulation comes from animal shelters that do not ensure that the pets they offer for adoption are spayed or neutered. These shelters are revolving doors for pets and their offspring.

Pet overpopulation, or at least attitudes that perpetuate the problem, even comes from advertisements for pet products. Happy children romp with puppies and kittens in an effort to push cat and dog food. These companies are very concerned about keeping pets healthy through good nutrition, but they also do their part to foster pet overpopulation and assure more sales.

Finally, pet overpopulation comes from pet owners who allow their unaltered pets outside, where they *do* breed. It comes from people who allow their pets to have "just one litter," for whatever reason, or from pet

owners who realize that "Sam" is really "Samantha" only after she delivers kittens.

Many of these people would appear to be model pet owners. They provide veterinary care for their animals, give them special toys, fancy collars, and gourmet pet food. They spend a lot of money on their pets—sales of pet products are expected to exceed \$8 billion this year. When they allow their animals to breed, however, even if by accident, they are irresponsible and the root of the pet-overpopulation problem.

There are many causes of pet overpopulation, but there are also many solutions. For more than twenty years, The HSUS has worked to expose the cruelties of pet overpopulation and the ways to prevent the unnecessary suffering it causes. In the last three years, our "Be a P.A.L.—Prevent A Litter" campaign has been implemented by thousands of individuals and groups across the country.

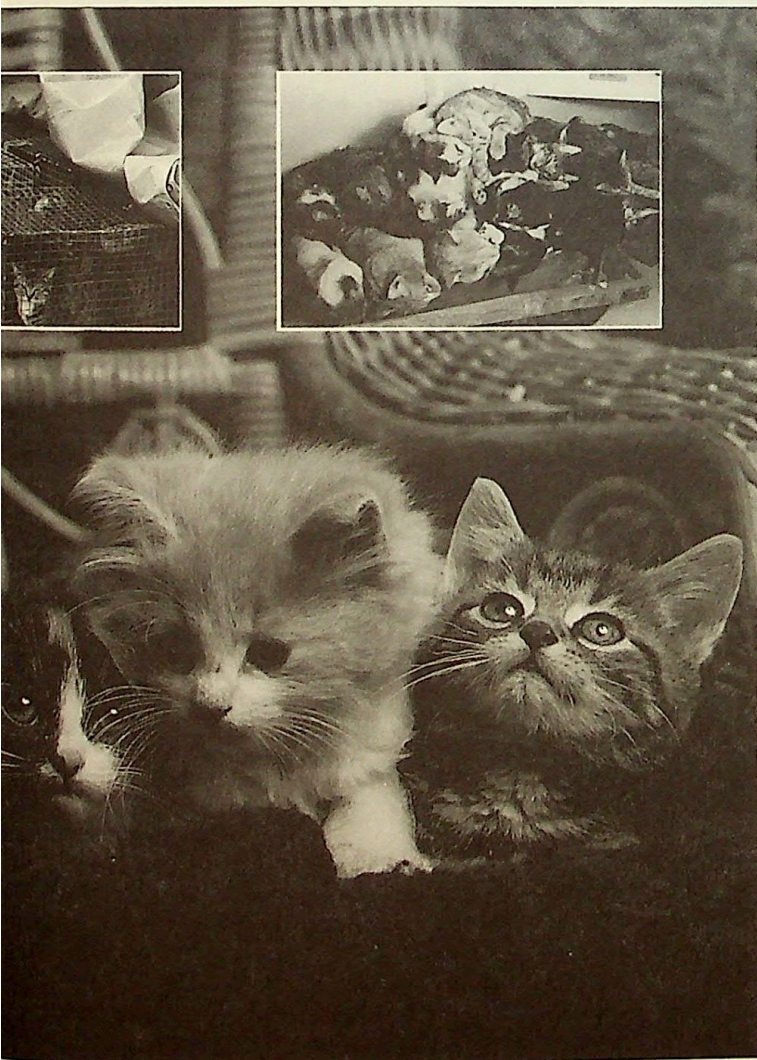
Veterinarians in increasing numbers are educating their clients about the importance and advantages of having their pets spayed or neutered. Cooperative programs by veterinarians, humane groups, and individuals offer reduced-fee surgeries for animals whose owners can't afford the regular price.

Legislation that protects animals by requiring responsible pet ownership is in place in many parts of the country. Mandatory sterilization of shelter animals, differential licensing, and ordinances regulating the breeding of animals all contribute to responsible pet ownership.

Pet overpopulation is not the millions of surplus animals born each year but one animal or one litter, turned in, given away, sold, abandoned, or no longer cared for. This correlation is rarely understood by the individuals turning in, giving away, selling, or abandoning their animals.

Our challenge is to reach people before they reach the point of giving up their pet, before they allow their pets to breed, and, in many cases, before they make the decision to get a pet in the first place. Talk to your neighbor, your city council, your local media. With a single litter, a single animal, we can make a difference.

*Kate Rindy is an associate in the HSUS Companion Animals Division and Rhonda Lucas Donald is editor of Shelter Sense.*



THE TERRY WILD STUDIO—INSETS (L. TO R.) HSUS; HUSBANKER; HSUS/WRIGHT



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