

NETWORK NEWS

Linking Members Of North Shore Animal League, Inc.,
The Pet Savers Foundation, Inc. And The SPAY/USA Networks

Getting Somewhere!

Although we know that spay/neuter(s/n) programs and clinics have a very healthy effect on companion animal overpopulation, we are often asked to "prove" it. Those needing to be convinced are county boards of commissioners, animal control departments, boards of directors and sometimes even entire humane societies! Well, the proof is in this newsletter.

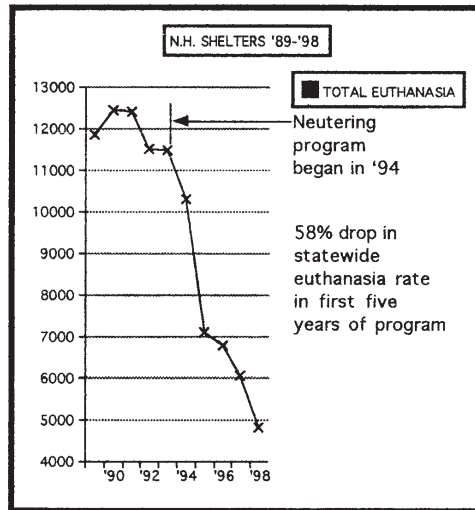
A few of our leading volunteers have offered to compile numbers and write an article for us. We've selected three areas of the country: the state of New Hampshire, the Shenandoah Valley on the Virginia/West Virginia border, and the Gulf Coast of Louisiana. The first program is a statewide s/n network that used legislation, education and statewide subsidy help to reduce the numbers. Here are the stories in the words of those who developed the programs.

Walking The Talk By Peter Marsh, Founder and Director of Solution to End Overpopulation of Pets (N.H.)

For years we've been telling everyone who cares for companion animals how important it is to have them neutered. Fortunately, they've taken our word and spent hundreds of millions of dollars on neutering. Because of that, the tide of homeless animals crested some time ago and has begun to recede almost everywhere.

We won't win our fight against pet overpopulation, though, until we begin to take our own advice. Most companion animal protection groups and shelters spend less than 5% of their budgets on neutering assistance programs. Any system that spends 19 times more to treat a problem than to prevent it in the first place is doomed to an endless struggle.

There is no longer any excuse for us not to do what we say. Everything we've learned in recent years shows



that what we've been telling people all along is right.

First — and best of all — neutering saves lives. Effective neutering programs dramatically reduce pet overpopulation. For instance, in 1993 11,500 homeless dogs and cats were put to death in New Hampshire shelters, a number that had remained the same for a decade. Our statewide neutering assistance program began the following year and the death toll has dropped every single year since then. By last year, the toll was less than 5,000, a drop of almost 60% in only five years.

Neutering programs save money, too. They more than pay for themselves. It's cost us \$840,000 to operate our program for five years, lock, stock and barrel, including all veterinary fees and administrative expenses down to the last paper clip. During that time 22,000 fewer cats and dogs entered our shelters than in the five years before we had the program. This has saved us more than 1.5 million dollars on impoundment costs alone, not counting the savings to municipalities from reduced animal control expenses.

But the most important reason for us to invest more in neutering

assistance programs is that we won't ever end pet overpopulation if we don't. Most everyone knows by now that we can't build enough shelters or adopt out enough animals to do it. And although education programs are a critical part of our work, they can only carry us so far. They can't help with the two biggest sources of surplus pets that remain - homeless pets and those from low-income households. The most convincing programs are of no value to pet caretakers who just don't have the money to follow through.

New Hampshire's program costs residents about 15¢ a year per person. This includes all costs, veterinary and administrative. Public funding is a great source of money for neutering assistance programs. Indeed, it's probably essential. But it can't be the only source.

So it's up to us to take our fight against pet overpopulation to the next level. Companion animal protection groups that don't operate shelters should at least "tithe" to neutering subsidy programs. And shelters with endowments that total more than a year's operating costs must do the same.

TALK (-) ACTION = 0, according to the Activist Equation. The verdict is not that harsh here. Public education programs have helped greatly. But it's become plain that TALK(-)ACTION < ENOUGH.

Program Results in 20% Decrease! By Susan Goodman Founder of Spay Today, Inc.

Spay Today, Inc. is a non profit spay/neuter organization that serves numerous counties, both in Virginia and West Virginia. The human population for the areas served is approximately 125,000, small and rural. Since the organization's inception in July 1994, the program has helped neuter over 8,000 cats and dogs with its major focus on cats.

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AREA SHELTER STATISTICS

Facility	Incoming Cats In 1996	Number Of Cats In 1997	Decrease	%
SPCA Winchester, Virginia	1771	1295	476	27%
Frederick County, VA	1000	801	199	20%
Jefferson County, West VA	831	676	155	19%

It is important to note that the Virginia area covered has a human population growth rate of 3 1/2% per year and Jefferson County, West Virginia is the state's second fastest growing county.

Spay Today started out in 1994 with only one veterinarian in West Virginia and used an office desk and a single phone line in an auto parts store. The organization recruited the best veterinarian, a great and fast surgeon, and a prudent businessman. He looked at this program for what it is. The program was designed to make it as easy as possible for the veterinarians. Spay Today does the advertising, talks to and educates the people about the spay and neuter procedures, collects the money from the people, arranges the surgeries, and pays the veterinarians once a week. The veterinarian has very little contact with the client and he gets paid on time. An interesting note: When we ask the office help at this veterinarian hospital if they ever saw these people again, they guessed that about 75% of these people became regular clients.

Spay/Neuter Fees:

Cat Spay	\$ 36.00
Cat Neuter	18.00
Rabies	6.00
4 in 1 Vac.	8.00

After only six short months, Spay Today was approached by four other veterinary hospitals, all of whom now work with this program.

The shelter figures for 1998 are not all in yet, but for the first quarter, the numbers are still on the decline. If it can work in these rural areas of Virginia and West Virginia, it can work anywhere. For more information, call us at 304-728-8330.

Changing Companion Animal Demographics along the Gulf Coast of Louisiana

By Paul Berry, Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Southern Animal Foundation

Southern Animal Foundation is headquartered in New Orleans, LA and was founded in 1996 to address the burgeoning problem of pet overpopulation in the region. In an economy which ranks at the very bottom of most national socioeconomic appraisals, the Foundation has pioneered a cost-effective, community-based approach to providing high-volume spay/neuter services to pets of low-income families and animal rescue groups.

When we started three years ago, we surveyed the country, studying all the best approaches to reducing pet overpopulation. We found that some communities were beginning to report significant reductions in euthanasia rates through high-volume spay/neuter programs that specifically targeted pets of lower-income families. Our local shelter directors agreed that over 90% of the animals euthanized in our community originate from the more impoverished areas. So an aggressive, low-cost spay/neuter program aimed at the indigent demographic would be the obvious first step in building a meaningful response to our problem.

In researching spay/neuter options in our area, we found, much to our surprise, that some

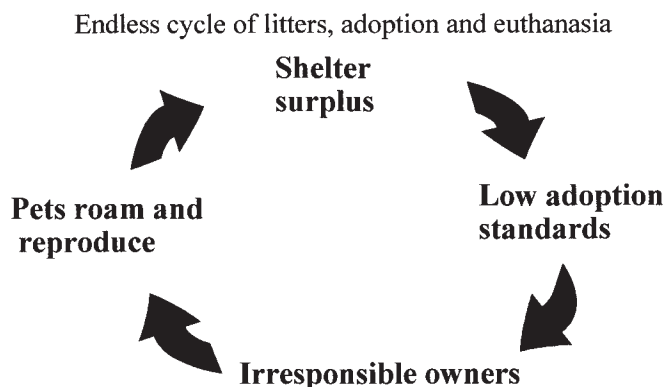
local veterinarians were already providing services at prices comparable to or below the average prices we found at non-profit clinics in our national study; e.g., \$25 cat spay to \$45 dog spay. Much more was needed, we knew, and to meet the needs in our economy, we would have to offer higher-volume services as close to free as funding would allow.

The only high-volume, free clinic we found in our study was the SNAP Clinic in Houston which is owned and operated by the national organization, The Fund for Animals and well subsidized by the City of Houston. We were only a small grass roots effort in an economy where 40% of city employees were at or below the poverty line. We did not have the security of a national fund-raising machine nor could we expect any ongoing financial support from our city.

Our options were few: we could start a non-profit clinic, compete with local veterinarians, for regular-income clients and use the profits to subsidize the work for low-income clients; or we could find a way to partner with the established humane groups in our area and share the burden of a non-competitive, cooperative effort. Our research indicated that with either approach, the best we could do at unit cost is duplicate what some vets in our community were already offering; i.e., we couldn't improve much on the cost of a \$25 cat spay to \$45

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Going nowhere





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dog spay, whether we raised funds to purchase services from an existing veterinary clinic or started our own clinic operation and hired a veterinarian to do the work.

So why, then, compete with the vets? The social change experts say that if our work as a grass roots movement is to legitimize as true institutional reform, we must coalesce at certain levels with the veterinary industry. And why not work with the other local humane groups toward a community-based alliance?

Economically, we knew that if we really wanted to create a sustainable response, commensurate to the magnitude of the problem in our community, we would have to raise annual funds roughly equivalent to the combined funds of the many local humane groups already working on the problem. The other groups knew this as well. As we discussed the options openly and earnestly with other humane groups and the representatives of the local veterinary association, we began to build on a shared team concept that would eventually evolve into a best-case scenario for our community, better than any of us had imagined in the beginning.

In 1996, with local and national start-up funding, we managed to purchase a used mobile veterinary surgical van and began marketing free spay-neuter services restricted to pets of low-income families in metro and surrounding rural areas. When enough clients from a particular township or parish qualified for the service, we would organize and fund a demonstration visit to the area. As the demand in each area quickly gained momentum, we would offer a matching-fund arrangement to the municipality or representative humane agency to keep the effort going. In the three years since our

inception, we have managed to forge long-term, cooperative partnerships with local municipalities and humane groups in 15 cities across ten parishes in the Greater New Orleans area.

Some of the sponsoring animal control agencies we began working with early on have tracked various statistical indicators in their constituent areas to measure the progress of the cooperative effort. Ceily Trogg, Animal Control Director in St. Bernard Parish targeted spay-neuter services at a specific area with high-incidence of stray cats. Nuisance calls were monitored over a two-year period. Within six months, nuisance calls had been

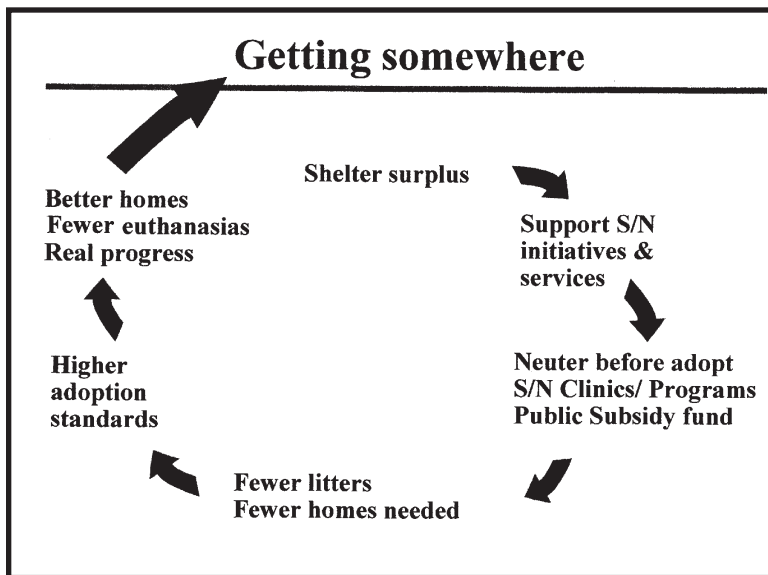
Of course, better results are achieved as consistent, high-volume output is sustained over time. Throughout the effort, we have continued to seek innovative ways to meet the overwhelming demand for our services, as well as the ongoing challenges of fundraising in our economy. We maintained the dialogue with the local veterinary association over the past three years, and through much consideration and negotiation, we have managed to create a mutually beneficial coalition, which we believe will accomplish that best-case scenario in our community.

We are very pleased to announce the Coalition to Establish Charity Animal Hospital of Greater New Orleans: a low-cost, high-volume spay-neuter facility which will also provide at-cost general care for low-income family pets and extend crisis care to injured wildlife. The project is a coalition effort of the Southeast Louisiana Veterinary Association (SLVA), Audubon Institute and Southern Animal Foundation. Veterinarians of the 190-member SLVA will donate labor to the project and Audubon Institute will provide equipment, labor and expertise. Southern Animal

Foundation will administer the campaign and ongoing operations.

Coalition members share board ownership and the responsibility of organizational design and implementation. We believe this shared ownership of shared resources will maximize long-term fiscal sustainability of the project by minimizing annual operations costs. And with less pressure on annual fundraising, it should be much easier to stay focused on the work that needs to be done.

For more information, contact Southern Animal Foundation at (504)861-SPAY.



reduced by 80%, and by the tenth month calls were reduced to negligible levels, freeing up critical ACO time.

Bert Smith, Director of the largest animal control district in Greater New Orleans, has tracked overall impoundments and euthanasia statistics to measure the effectiveness of our partnership in his area. In just under three years with the program, Mr. Smith reports a 20% decrease in animal impoundments, as well as a 22% reduction in euthanasia over the same time frame. These are tangible results that prove real progress can be achieved in a relatively short period of time through sustained, high-volume spay-neuter.