



By Peter Marsh

THE TOP TEN THINGS WE'VE LEARNED FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE'S SPAY/NEUTER PROGRAM

10. YOU CAN BUILD IT

Some people said hyper-frugal New Hampshire legislators would never ante up for a neutering assistance program. But once they understood the toll that pet overpopulation takes on their communities and how effective neutering programs can be they agreed to give the program a try. Since then, they've made it permanent and steadfastly stood by it.

9. VETS WILL HELP

More and more vets have joined the program as they've seen that it treats them fairly and helps shelter adopters and people in genuine need. Now more than two-thirds of the vets in the state are on board, making it accessible in even the most remote spots.

8. THEY WILL COME

Some people worried that low-income people would not avail themselves of the program. They shouldn't have. Like most everyone else, they want what's best for their pets, including neutering, they just can't afford it. Charging them only \$10 and providing up to \$15 worth of free presurgical shots brings neutering within their reach, too.

7. KEEP IT SIMPLE

Our State Veterinarian has streamlined the program to the bone, making it easy on vets and pet owner alike, while keeping it cheap for the administrators. Administrative expenses have been less than \$10 a neuter.

6. A LITTLE FUNDING CAN GO A LONG WAY

With the 20% fee reduction donated by vets and the co-payment from low-income pet owners (\$10) and shelter adopters (\$25), the average subsidy cost to the program has been leveraged to less than \$40 a neuter.

5. YOU HAVE TO SPREAD THE NEWS

Local human service agencies did a great job launching the low-income program by telling their clients about it and giving them applications.

4. YOU HAVE TO WORK TOGETHER

To foster the program's growth, humane groups have worked side by side with breeders, legislators and municipal officials on a panel created by the state legislature. The study committee, now entering its fourth year has successfully sponsored legislation of great benefit to the neutering assistance program and other animal welfare initiatives.

3. IF A LOT CONTRIBUTE, IT ONLY COSTS A LITTLE

Our state program is funded entirely by a \$2 surcharge on all dog licenses. An increase in the "spay or pay" differential paid by those who license unsterilized dogs would be a better way to fund low-income neutering program. A differential increase of only \$5 would be enough for one like ours. Another five dollars would pay for a shelter adopters program.

2. EFFECTIVE NEUTERING PROGRAMS SAVE MONEY

It's inexpensive to make neutering programs affordable for the poorest pet owners, but it's a great investment because it's so high impact. Animals are neutered that never would be otherwise. Despite the high initial cost, it actually saves money. Since our program began, the money spent on it has been more than offset by savings from the dramatic drop in the number of animals entering shelters.

1. BEST OF ALL, EFFECTIVE NEUTERING PROGRAMS SAVE LIVES

The year before our state program started, more than 30 cats and dogs were put down every day in New Hampshire shelters. That number had been about the same for more than ten years. By the end of last year, it had fallen to less than 20 animals killed a day, a drop of 38% in only two years.