High Cost of Spay/Neuter is a Major Contributing Factor of Dog Overpopulation

A Targeted Spay/Neuter Awareness Campaign Utilizing Conventional Media

Tags Words: Dogs; Spay; Neuter; Overpopulation; Companion Animals; Animal Control

Authors: Eric Zuzzi, Kristen Semanchik & Henry Arevalo with Julie M. Fagan, Ph.D

Summary

Overpopulation of companion animals, particularly of dogs, is rapidly becoming endemic to nearly every portion of the United States. As a result, it is approximated that four million dogs are euthanized each year with hundreds of thousands more languishing in overcrowded and poorly maintained shelters. The cause of this problem is deeply rooted in irresponsible or ignorant pet owners who fail to have their dogs spayed or neuter, leading to unplanned litters and stray animals reproducing rapidly in the wild. This ignorance and irresponsibility is two-fold; pet owners are both unaware of the importance of spaying or neutering their pet and many are barred from accessing the surgery due to its high cost. To remedy this problem, we focused on raising awareness of the importance of spaying or neutering your pet and advertised for low-cost surgery options that are available in the low-income areas of New Brunswick, New Jersey through boots on the ground physical media. (EZ)

Video Link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dM7HONnE0HM&feature=BFa&list=UUts4_1WyqXMmVDfu9ZffstA&lf=plpp_video

Dog Overpopulation: An Epidemic

Extent of Animal Overpopulation

(HA) Animal overpopulation is a big concern for many animal shelters across the nation. Around the United States over six to eight million cats and dogs enter shelters throughout the country. There is an average of three thousand five hundred shelters across the United States. Out of the six million entering shelters, three to four million are killed each year due to shortage of shelters. Many animals such as dogs are bred to make puppies for sale, and then discarded when they are not wanted. Some dogs are bred for fighting purposes. Some dogs are bought at stores, but owners eventually give up their dogs to a shelter hoping they will find a good home for them. It is a sad fact that so many of these animals are put down just so that others that are in need can take their place. Many of the animals that are killed are healthy too, so it is even sadder that they could have made a great pet for someone. This raises the question as to why there are so many cats and dogs.
Evolutionary Influences

In the animal kingdom nature seems to find a way to balance itself. Humans have altered nature, which is a factor of the growing overpopulation of felines and man’s best friend. We have taken dogs and cats out of their natural habitats, bred them continuously, and have protected them, so their natural predators cannot keep their population in check. This speculation can be seen with many other close relatives of these two animals. For example, overpopulation of wolves is not a problem, nor is there an overpopulation of lions, tigers or any other wild cat. Dogs are not native to all areas, yet they are found almost everywhere. It is through human intervention and selective breeding that we have changed the evolutionary pattern of these two animals. Now thousands of years later, we are struggling to keep their population in check.

The exact reason as to why dogs were domesticated thousands of years ago is unknown. Many scientists argue that they were domesticated during a period of time that humans were hunter-gatherers. Some uses for the domestication of these dogs include for protection, help during hunting and because they are easy to train. It is most likely that the first dogs that were domesticated were baby wolves that were trained to not be as aggressive. They then were bred and thus down many generations you had dogs that were affectionate towards humans.

Commercialization of Dog Ownership

Another reason that can be attributed to the overpopulation of cats and dogs is for commercial reasons. While we have been breeding dogs and cats for hunting and help, another reason for breeding is for sale. Many times dogs found at the pet shops come from puppy mills that produce purebreds because they are genetically superior. Others find ways to mix two different breeds in order to make a “cute puppy” or a specific type of dog. When one goes to a puppy store and sees many puppies, what the consumer does not realize is that the litter that is in the shop may be one of many litters that a mother dogs had. Sometimes mother dogs have numerous puppies for their owners to make a quick buck. Some of these dogs spend their entire lives only to make humans money. Dogs have also become main attractions at dog shows, for racing, and for fighting.

Many times people buy a pet instead of adopting and this causes one less animal to be saved and killed instead. Although the shelters provide a temporary home for animals, they are not in the best conditions. Many of these places are run by non-profit organizations and rely on donations for support. While buying a dog may seem like a great idea, many people do not realize they are doing more harm than good. They keep promoting the use of puppy mills and making the breeders money.

Irresponsibility of Pet Owners

Although it is not as common, some dogs and cats end up being lost, or are abandoned by their owners to fend for themselves. One in five dogs are lost at some point in their lives and only 16% find their way home. The rest are either killed or rescued by a shelter and never find their original homes. “Pet overpopulation is attributable to relinquishment and abandonment, as well as to birth rates; thus, veterinarians must strive to reduce pet overpopulation by not only curbing
reproduction, but also by decreasing the major cause of pet death in the US. Many times dogs and cats are seen wandering the streets in many cities, scavenging for food, never knowing when their lives will end. Many times these animals wonder why they were loved only to be let down by their supposed “friends”.

Many times the owners get tired of the dog or find that it is too expensive to care for them and so they bring them back to a shelter. There are many people that just decide to get a dog because they feel the need to either fill a void, or want to have responsibility. “Millions of pets are humanely killed in US animal shelters because owners are not committed to the continual responsibilities of pet care”. What people do not seem to understand is that these creatures have a heart, feelings, and have a desire to be loved. Dogs also give love back and would give their lives for their owners. Sometimes due to economic hardships, owners give-up their dogs in hopes of the shelter finding a loving home for them. In other cases, people do not consider their friends when drastic changes occur in a person’s life. For example, a marriage, or a baby, or change in home can alter the option of keeping a dog in the house. This is why many people need to research the responsibility of owning a dog, and not just getting one because they want one. Getting a dog is not like getting a toy that you will play with until you get a better toy or you become bored with it. A dog’s companionship is for a lifetime, and that is what people fail to comprehend. Since there are no laws or restrictions to getting a dog, people find out if they can have a pet by trial and error, which is not fair to cats and dogs.

Other irresponsible actions by humans are to use dogs for fighting purposes. “For more than a century, humans have deliberately pitted dog-aggressive dogs that will instinctively fight against one another”. Just as there are specific breeds of dogs for herding, and for hunting, there are also aggressive breeds such as pitbulls. Pitbulls already have a reputation for being overly aggressive, and for that reason many of them are used for fighting as seen with the Michael Vick case. “The United States Department of Agriculture Office of Inspector General’s records indicated fifty-two pit bulldogs were involved in the case”. It is also noted on the ASPCA website that an increasing number of pit bulls entering shelters. It is the government’s job to help regulate dog’s population so that more dogs go to better homes.

Influence of Current Laws

Government laws also provide some problems to people who actually want to help some pets. For example, there are some shelters that will not adopt outside of their county, city or even state. Many of the problems lie within the government since there are no laws to giving up a pet. Many people upon getting tired of their pet, give them up by signing one paper and saying goodbye dog or cat. When adopting a dog or a cat, there are certain rules. Although some rules are applied in order to prevent the harm of the pets, other precautions can be taken in order to ensure the friend is getting the home he/she deserves.

Man’s Best Friend

What some people fail to realize is that dogs are your friends, and they have been domesticated for thousands of years to be our companions. Some dogs are for companionship, some are for hunting, some are for herding. Whatever the case may be, many of these dogs need our love and affection. All humans have different lives, and different obligations. For this reason,
not every person is fit to have a dog. Especially those who obtain puppies, the dogs need time to grow, and to be disciplined. A person who is not home regularly should not have a dog.

In the event that a person has researched having a dog as a pet and is ready to commit to the task, one must realize the steps that need to be taken in order to help the overpopulation of dogs in shelters.

The first step in trying to have a dog as a pet is to have the time, the money and the love for the dog. The second is the type of dog, and the shelter that one wants to adopt from. Lastly, one of the steps that need to be looked at is neutering and spaying your dog. What is the use of adopting a pet, if your pet decides to get a female dog pregnant and then she has a litter. Now you have a new litter that others will want, and you take away from dogs that could have been rescued.

**Effectiveness of Current Spay/Neuter Programs**

Apart from the addition of new puppies into an already overpopulated world, there are many health benefits to neutering your pet. First it helps avoid certain types of prostate cancers that they would get if they were not neutered. Another pro is that they tend to have less aggression towards other dogs given that their testosterone levels decrease. Many dogs are naturally aggressive, especially towards other males. It is a natural instinct that males compete, not only for a mate but to prove dominance. By neutering your pet, you lessen that aggression towards other male dogs. They will still have their protective instinct, but they will become more calm and collected. You are also less likely to have your dog run away looking for a mate. This may lead to confrontations with other dogs, or getting hurt.

**Use of Animal Shelters**

One of the many positives of shelters is that many of them require dogs to be neutered, in order to be adopted. In some shelters, if enough money is donated they try to neuter their animals. “Major efforts are underway to reduce this problem, with one of the largest efforts being spearheaded by Maddie's Fund. Maddie's Fund programs focus on encouraging spay/neuter and adoptions through economic incentives and marketing”. By having the dogs and cats neutered, people may be more inclined to adopt a certain animal. The reason for this likeliness in adoption is because it is one less expense the owner needs to worry about. Sometimes these shelters adopt out dogs with a contract that strictly says the dogs must be neutered in order to keep the dog. This can prevent irresponsible breeding from occurring.

**Low Cost or Free Spay/Neuter Programs**

One may find many low cost or even free spaying and neutering programs online. The website, [www.petsandanimals.org](http://www.petsandananimals.org) has a link that lists many low cost neutering places by state. They also have an email address that a pet owner can contact in the event they cannot find a location nearby. ASPCA also has partnerships with some programs that can help you locate low cost neutering clinics. “Through our partnership with PetSmart Charities, our comprehensive and searchable database is designed to help you find low-cost spay and neuter programs in your community”. In Pittsburg, PA they have a neuter program for its residents. They have their own
website and its rules and regulations for spaying and neutering animals. In North Carolina, one can find the “first mobile low-cost spay-neuter service in North Carolina”. Even their slogan “Prevent Another Litter” supports the control of cat and dog populations. These are just a few of the many programs that help low-income families to neuter or spay their friends. It is the owners job and responsibility to do the research and carryout the neuter-spay.

**Questioning Spay/Neuter**

Many people question the neutering of their pets for many reasons, and one of them is cost. Although it does cost money to neuter dogs, there are programs that work with shelters that help reduce the cost of neutering your companions. Aftercare is also very important, and some people do not wish to see their friend feel hurt or injured. Research must be done by people on the benefits of neutering ones pet. Many people question the pros of neutering a pet because of costs, implications that could occur, or because they don’t want to do it to their pets. The reality is that through efforts by shelters, government and veterinarians, a plan should be put in place to help save the dogs that are coming into shelters everyday. Stricter laws should be placed upon buying or adopting a dog if they want to get rid of their companions.

One of the biggest reasons that people do not get their pets neutered is because of cost. There are many low cost or free spay/neuter programs across every state. If there are not in people’s immediate area, there are listings of humane and rescue groups in many areas. It is important to spay/neuter them because in cats, they can begin mating as young as six months. The same is also true for some breeds of dogs. If left unchecked, a male cat can father hundreds of cats. Online there are some programs that will spay/neuter you adopted animal for ten dollars, if you receive some type of government aid. Neutering your pet has more benefits than people think. People who have no prior knowledge should research and/or ask their veterinarian about why one should spay or neuter their pets.

Dogs count on us for love, and a home. Humans have many things that occupy their time, but a dog only has their owner. A dog’s life lasts up until 15 years max, and to them time away from their owners seems like an eternity. Dogs have the ability to rip us apart, yet they only show us love and affection. It is tough sometimes to train a dog, but remember that everyone at one point struggled to learn something, and dogs look to humans for guidance. Also when dogs are weary and old, many people forget that one day they too will grow old and weak, and would be hurt if they were left to die. Sometimes people wish that dogs would stay young and cute forever. Once the dogs grow up some people do not want their pets anymore and the older they get, the more neglected they are. Eventually the dogs resent the fact that they were neglected, yet they still show us love. The day arrives that a dog is no longer playful, and people dump them at shelters in hopes that the shelter will love them. No one wants to go through life’s hardships alone. A dog is no different, and during his/her toughest times all they want is someone to love them and make them feel like everything will be alright.

**Why Dog Owners Do Not Spay or Neuter Their Pets**

(KS) The underlying theme to the heart of our problem asks the question of why dog owners do not spay or neuter their pets in the first place. Humans have created this problem of animal overpopulation, and this overpopulation stems from the over breeding of these animals. So it
would seem most reasonable to stop the issue where it starts. It also starts with what action the dog owner takes. It comes to no surprise that the hope of addressing this situation comes only from the choices dog owners make.

**Gaining Valuable Information**

Evaluating this information could lead to answers and solutions to reduce the amount of dogs in America, and even more importantly the amount of dogs that do not have homes and good care, as a result of overpopulation. Reducing the American dog population would also lead to the reduction of dogs not being taken care of. All of the steps to take action against this issue would be illuminated if the reasons why dog owners do not spay and neuter their pets were properly documented. Are there social issues to be concerned with, or economical? Could it be based on demographics or culture? In order to devise a plan of action, we need to find where our efforts need to be made. Research in the form of surveys and opening communication between officials and dog owners would allows us to pin point specific problems and effectively solve them.

So what is standing in the way of having dog owners making responsible decisions? A sample of the reasons why they do not come from data collected by a telephone survey previously conducted in Massachusetts: The major reasons for not sterilizing animals were: unnecessary because the animal was confined (31.6%), wanted to breed the animal (23.6%), animal was too young (18.4%), and it was inconvenient (10.5%). This data was collected using a phone survey, an option of communication.

**Attitudes and Opinions of Owners: Education level, Personal Preference and Low Income Areas**

(KS) The core of this issue stems for the choices made by the owners. Their opinions, and thus the opinions of society reflect on whether or not a dog owner is going to choose to spay or neuter their animals. It is the behavior of the owners. Dog owners take care of their animals depending on what information they learn or gather through what education is available. It is reasonable to assume that the majority of owners do not have an intrinsic understanding of veterinary medicine, and as is true will base their decisions on common belief or opinion rather than on medical proof. For example, studies done to evaluate the influence of this nonscientific and nonmedical decision making having shown that outside opinions can cause owners to not spay and neuter their pets. One study showed how the sex of the animal is a determination of whether or not the owner will consent to sterilization. A human male owner was less likely to neuter his male animal. Also the level of education of the owner was also a component of owners spaying and neutering their animals. Statistical trends also suggested that owners with a “postschool” education had a higher percentage of sterilized nonhuman animals than owners with no “postschool” or only school-age education.

**Cost is a Key Factor**

If cost is the main issue, such as we have hypothesized, then our campaign will spread awareness of such programs to help finance spay and neuter surgeries. Through the information
we collect and research we can justify cost as the main issue. Research already done to show what the impact of cost exudes on the choice or decision of the owner to opt for such options.

The fact that sponsored spay and neuter programs have helped to reduce numbers of animals coming into shelters shows how this is one of the main reasons why owners do not get their dogs spayed and neutered. Financially supporting sterilization efforts was shown in a study done in New Hampshire. When spay and neuter programs were subsided, there was an increase in only the total number of neuters.13

**Modified Surgery by Human Alliance**

An organization called Humane Alliance provides pet owners with a modified surgery process, that it described in more detail in the next section. "Some people ask us to hold their check until payday. But at least they see it as being a price they can afford," says Karla Brestle, HA's medical director.14 This response gives validity to the cost issues standing in the way of owners properly taking care of their pets. Also, along with this innovative technique there have been drastic reductions of animals being euthanized in shelters, helping further show how if owners could be helped with the cost of sterilization a real impact on reducing domestic dog numbers could be accomplished.

Fear of putting their dogs under the knife in surgery may also be another factor that results in owners refusing or choosing not to spay and neuter their animals. Perhaps alternative methods that incorporate reduced cost and/ or alternatives to surgery would prove to be conductive to insure that non-breeding domesticated household pets would be sterilized in order to prevent unwanted additions to the animal overpopulation controversy.

**Alternative Methods for Spay/ Neuter Surgery**

Surgery is popularly viewed as a potential hazardous and serious undertaking. Let alone the cost of surgery, the invasiveness of such procedures could prove detrimental to the efforts made to increase dog owners participating in this necessary responsibility. This could very well be the However, if there were other options for owners weary of committing to a surgical operation, and then perhaps more owners would spay and neuter their dogs.

**Innovative Surgical Methods**

An organization call Humane Alliance, has provided animal owners with an improved surgical option. The organization has its own vets and trains other vets, both helping in their surgical facilities or in their own private practices. Humane Alliance has innovated the protocol for how sterilization surgeries are performed and the efficiency of the operation itself. Both time and methods are crucial factors in reducing the cost of the surgery both to the vet conducting the operation and the pet owner. These innovative surgical procedures also reduce the risk posed on the animals themselves, as the surgeries are shorter and the animals are under anesthesia for a shorter period of time. Due to this organization’s successes and the effectiveness of the program it has been given money from humane organizations, and charities such as from PetSmart.14
These reduced fees will give owners incentive and extra motivation to get their dogs spayed and neutered.

An excerpt from the USA Today article explains how these specialized procedures offered a better answer for spaying and neutering animals to help control animal overpopulation:

Specialization and practice is the short answer. "The typical veterinarian clinic is staffed, equipped and set up to do hundreds of different things well," says Mississippi State University professor of veterinary medicine Philip Bushby. He studied the HA surgical techniques, which include smaller incisions and specific closing protocols, and teaches them to his mobile clinic students. "If the staff, if all the equipment and all the protocols are geared only to doing one thing, and if you do 40 or 50 a day, you get extremely good at that."  

Possibilities for Alternative Methods

This seems to be of the most promising alternative methods for dog owners. An effective surgical procedure that is adaptive and reduces the cost and time of the surgeries is proven to help combat animal overpopulation by providing owners with reduced cost of spaying and neutering.

Use of Hormones

However, could there be an even similar and less invasive method to spaying and neutering that could eliminate the need for an actual surgical procedure? Perhaps if there was a hormone supplement that owners could give to their animals that would sterilize them using the expertise of endocrinology even more control of the domestic dog population could be accomplished.

A study conducted shows the use of manipulating sex steroids, specifically a hormone released from the hypothalamus called GnRH (gonadotropin releasing hormone). This particular hormone is used by the body to make animal reproductively sound. If this hormone was manipulated in a way, either by using chemicals or injecting the animal with the hormone, then this could be an alternative method to surgery. For example in the study using, slow release GnRH agonist (a substance which acts like GnRH) implants cause a downregulation of pituitary GnRH receptors. Because this hormone was blocked a temporary reversible hormonal castration is achieved. Although the licensed indication for the GnRH implant Suprelorin (R) is induction of temporary infertility in male dogs.

An Awareness Project Targeted at Low-Income Areas

Purpose of Our Awareness Campaign

(EZ) As has already been established, there are a variety of contributing factors that impact whether or not pet owners responsibly get their dog spayed or neutered. We have determined that the most prevalent determining factors are cost and awareness; pet owners are unwilling to
potentially spend a few hundred dollars or are unaware of the importance and benefits of having their dog altered. In addition, many pet owners are also ignorant to the fact that there are many reputable, independent low-cost clinics in which skilled veterinarians can perform the same spay and neuter surgeries at a much lower cost.

The goal of our campaign, therefore, seeks to rectify the aforementioned problems revolving around the spay and neuter process. We partnered with Animal Alliance, a low-cost clinic in Lambertville, New Jersey, that serves most of the Central New Jersey area. They provide spay and neuter procedures ranging from $125-$175 for dogs and $55-$75 for cats. This discrepancy in pricing depends on the gender and size of the animal, as generally a male animal will be much easier to neuter then it is to spay a female. In addition to these services, Animal Alliance offers routine shots and vaccines at a discounted price.

These services are essential to fulfilling our campaign, because as was mentioned earlier cost tops the list as the most important determining factor for whether or not pet owners responsibly alter their animals. By offering these services at such reasonable rates, Animal Alliance is already seeking to tackle the problem that we have identified and its mission complements our approach perfectly. Animal Alliance also goes a step further with addressing the issue of cost; pet owners on financial assistance are given the option of setting up no interest payment plans or further reduced rates on surgeries.

Since Animal Alliance already has the framework in place to address the issue of cost in the spay and neuter process, our campaign’s main focus fell to raising awareness about Animal Alliance and low-cost clinics in general, as well as educating pet owners on the importance of responsibly altering their pets.

**Awareness Campaign Methodology**

It has been established that cost is the most important factor that influences a pet owner’s decision to go ahead with a spay or neuter surgery. Therefore, it only seems logical that an awareness campaign should target low-income individuals. The affluent are more than capable of covering the costs of spay or neuter surgeries, yearly shots and routine visits to the veterinarian. However, low-income individuals as well as those on a fixed income or welfare will have a more difficult time affording basic care for a pet, never mind something that might be considered “extraneous” such as a spay and neuter surgery.

With the aforementioned in mind, we decided to target New Brunswick for our campaign. According to the U.S Census Bureau, approximately 25% of the population of New Brunswick is below the poverty line, which is much higher than the average for the state of New Jersey at only 9.1%. In addition, the median household income in New Brunswick is about $44,500 which is substantially lower than the average for the state of about $70,000. These statistics show that New Brunswick serves to benefit greatly from an awareness campaign for low-cost spay and neuter programs.

Our campaign was designed to be simple, direct and effective. We decided to focus on a “on the ground” or “grass roots” strategy. This was for several reasons. As has already been
emphasized, New Brunswick is a low-income area where poverty is very high; as such it would be ignorant to assume that a substantial portion of the New Brunswick population has access to electronics, the internet or social media. By designing a campaign that focuses on physical visibility within the community, we can ensure that the maximum numbers of people are exposed to our campaign. Also, we can tailor the awareness campaign to the demographics of the particular area of the city. For example, about 50% of the city of New Brunswick is of Latino descent and many of these people speak Spanish exclusively or understand very little English. This gives us the opportunity to translate our campaign into Spanish and directly target this large population.

**Awareness Campaign Design**

In order to raise awareness, our campaign focused on canvassing specific areas of New Brunswick with flyers that outlined the importance of spaying and neutering your pet, provided Animal Alliances contact information on tearable tabs and emphasized that it was a low-cost clinic (See Appendix A). The flyer was provided by Animal Alliance to make sure that we accurately conveyed their message and did not misrepresent their mission.

We decided, based on our intimate knowledge of the area, what locations would see the most traffic such that we could reach the widest audience of people. Apartment complexes, corner stores, pet stores, Laundromats and other popular destinations seemed like the most effective choices. In New Brunswick, many of these are located up and down Easton Avenue, thus we chose this busy artery with numerous businesses and apartments on either side to target, focusing on distributing English language flyers.

Our second target location was in the heart of New Brunswick itself deep within the city. This is where the Latino population is largely concentrated; therefore our focus here was on distributing Spanish language flyers only (See Appendix B). In this part of the city, there are corner grocery and convenience stores on nearly every corner, providing a rich environment to distribute our flyers and reach a wide audience. This was facilitated by having a native Spanish speaker in our group of volunteers who could more accurately convey the purpose of our campaign to business owners.

When available, we attempted to place the flyers in visible locations, such as near the entrance to a business or in a window. The most accommodating locations already had space set aside for community advertising; this was particularly true of apartment buildings where we were able to place our flyers directly in the lobby or the laundry room.

**Awareness Campaign Results**

In total, our campaign managed to distribute approximately thirty flyers in English and about twenty flyers in Spanish. Most businesses and locations where open to assisting us in facilitating our project, and many asked questions about spay and neuter and why it was such an important issue, particularly in the Latino communities it seemed poorly understood. In this way, we managed to not only educate people with our flyers but also we got to directly communicate and explain the importance of our campaign to people in person. In particular, one woman saw
us putting up a flyer and immediately began a conversation with us about spay and neuter and how she desperately wanted to get her cats fixed but could not afford it. In response, we quoted her a rate for Animal Alliance and promptly took down the phone number from the flyer, inquiring after us for directions so she could promptly take her animals to get fixed now that she was aware of a low-cost clinic.

Unfortunately, some businesses and locations were not up to having our flyers take up real estate in their windows or on their counters. To circumvent this, we targeted other locations in the same area so that the majority of the area was still canvassed. In addition, we also attempted to place our flyers in the most effective space available. For example, we placed our flyer at a Blockbuster store on Easton Avenue right above the drop-off for movie rentals.

To get a very rough idea about how effective our campaign was, we visited some of the locations where flyers had been posted a week later to see if they were still there and how many of the tabs had been removed. At all of the locations, the flyers were still up and legible and many of tabs had been taken, particularly from the Spanish flyers. This serves as anecdotal evidence of the effectiveness of our campaign, and serves as proof that physical dissemination of information is still a viable and effective means.

In conclusion, we firmly believe that our campaign will produce a positive impact on companion animal population of New Brunswick. We targeted our message and successfully disseminated the necessary information to raise awareness of the importance of fixing your pet, while simultaneously directing people towards a low-cost clinic. This project has not only demonstrated the importance of the mounting problem of pet overpopulation, but has highlighted a simple, yet effective, community-based effort that can be utilized to combat the problem.
References


Appendix A

English Language Flyer

Please, FIX YOUR PET! Low-Cost Spay/Neuter Clinic

Every year, millions of dogs and cats die in shelters because there are too many of them. Please be a responsible pet owner and FIX YOUR PET!!!

Call today! 609-818-1952
Por Favor,
Castrar a su mascota!
Clinica barrata para castrar

Cada año millones de perros y gatos se mueren en refugios porque hay muchos animales. Por favor sea responsable y CASTRE SU mascota!

Llame Hoy!
609-818-1952
Editorials

Sent to *The Star Ledger*

**Eric Zuzzi**

I am writing this letter to comment on a growing problem that faces our state and our nation, specifically the overpopulation of companion animals which is rapidly becoming endemic to many parts of New Jersey, particularly in the New Brunswick area, which I am intimately familiar with as a Rutgers student.

Feral and stray companion animals, mainly dogs and cats, pose a huge health risk to the community and generally end up euthanized in animal shelters. The most effective means at combating this growing problem is for responsible pet owners to get their companion animals spayed or neutered. There are a plethora of low-cost clinics throughout New Jersey who offer these important services performed by a licensed veterinarian at a reasonable cost. Spaying or neutering your pet prevents future litters from ending up roaming the streets or in overcrowded shelters, and prevents lost companion animals from copulating exponentially in the “wild”.

In addition, spaying or neutering greatly reduces the possibility that a pet will develop deadly cancers or undesirable behaviors such as mounting and aggression. Pet owners need to take responsibility for their animals to help curb this distressing and ballooning problem, and low-cost clinics are there to assist them.

Sent to *My Central New Jersey*

**Kristen Semanchik**

My name is Kristen Semanchik and I am a student at Rutgers University. I am currently taking a colloquium in Ethics in Science and Society. The class requires us to take responsibility to find a solution for a problem or issue that we find important. The issue that I am trying to find a solution for is animal overpopulation. As a part of my group’s service project our solution is to raise the awareness of the actual issue and inform the public about clinics that perform low cost spaying and neutering. We believe that through the education about this problem and what people could do on a personal level with their own pets could help to alleviate the large numbers of unwanted pets. Cost is usually a main deterrent to pet owners from getting their pets spayed and neutered, however allowing people to know about low cost spaying and neutering will help more pets to be fixed, and prevent more pets from being unwanted and unloved. To post the following ad in your newspaper would spread the information of the importance of spaying and neutering and where pet owners can go:

Animal overpopulation is a real problem, but it has a real solution. In order to decrease the amount of unwanted pets that are ending up in shelters, abandoned, mistreated and abused we can all take a step in preventing this horrible atrocity by spaying and neutering our pets. The cost of spaying and neuter your pet could be preventing you from being a part of the solution. However, there are low cost clinics that will fit your budget. Spaying and neuter your pet can also decrease their risk of cancers, urinary tract infections, bladder stones and more. To prolong the life of your pet and improve the life they already have it is important to get them spayed and neutered. The
organization Animal Alliance offers low cost spaying and neutering. They are located at: 1410 Route 179 North- Lambertville, NJ 08530. You can also find information at the website: www.animalalliance.nj.org. Animal Alliance also has pets that are already spayed and neutered for adoption.

Please be a part of the solution, it is up to us humans to help our animal friends in need and stop animal over population.

Thank you for your time.

Sent to The Daily Targum

Henry Arevalo

My name is Henry Arevalo and I am currently a senior at Rutgers University. I am studying Geography and Marine Science. Apart from my rigorous studies I try to remain active by playing basketball, and involved with many sports.

Before this past summer, I had never owned a pet not even a goldfish, so I was never home. My girlfriend had recently lost her dog and was devastated by the loss of her friend. In order to fill the void in her heart, I did research and adopted a small puppy which my girlfriend and I would raise together. She wanted to name the puppy sprinkle since her former dog was named cupcake. Ever since I held him in my arms, I felt a connection that I had never felt with another object or animal. The day we saved his life, changed my life forever. We did a lot of activities together and for the first time I knew the meaning of “man’s best friend”.

As the months passed, one of the requirements of adopting our puppy was to have him neutered, and I never understood why. I did research and got more involved with pets and shelters and the overpopulation of dogs and cats. It was not until then that I realized the hardships that some of these animals go through and it hurt me that they had to go through their entire lives without any place to call home. It was then that I was put into a group to do a service project on spreading awareness on neutering and spaying your pets.

At first we wanted to sponsor a pet from a shelter and raise money in order to pay for it getting neutered, but due to legal issues with the shelter, we were not allowed to conduct our fundraiser. That is when we were given the idea to make flyers to advertise a low cost clinic that would do the process for a low price. We came to this conclusion as our project since, one of the main reasons why people do not spay or neuter their pets is because of cost. The project would involve going to an urban area and putting up flyers where allowed in hopes that people would see the flyer and contact the clinic and bring their pets.

Upon reaching a busy avenue while we posted a flyer a woman approached us and asked us about the clinic because she had two female kittens that she did not want to get rid of but had to if they got pregnant because of the cost to maintain them. After a brief conversation she took the flyer and was excited about being able to neuter her cats for a low cost. Another woman had asked why it was good to neuter your pets since they would be in pain. After we explained the health benefits and the overpopulation of dogs and cats, she wanted the information because her pets had gotten pregnant once and did not want to add to the overpopulation.
It was a long day putting up all those flyers and thankfully the weather was nice, but the most satisfying reward was knowing that we may have saved a few more lives by prevention of any more baby dogs and cats that would take away from the dogs and cats already at shelters.

Every day I wake up with my puppy by my side I think of the life I saved and how in the future when I have my own home, I wish to further save more dogs and have them neutered because although they may not understand you, they do love you. We as humans have our jobs, school, friends to keep us busy, but they only have us.