

The 70% Solution

The 7% Solution was the key for Sherlock Holmes; the 70% Solution is the key to ending the number one cause of pet cruelty - overpopulation! The City of Columbia has one of the best spay/neuter ordinances in the state. Every animal is sterilized before it is available for adoption. In addition spays/neuters are required for any animal redeemed from the shelter back to the owners. This is a policy becoming more and more popular across the country and Lexington County has added support by banning the sale of puppies and kittens at flea markets. All of this is slowly making progress, but there is a key component. Much like interest compounding on dollars in savings, pet overpopulation grows exponentially in relation to the unsterilized population (1 male and female cat and their offspring can produce 420,000 cats in 7 years; 1 male and female dog and offspring can produce 67,000 dogs in 6 years). A study done by FIREPAW shows that it takes at least 8 years of a full spay/neuter program to begin to show reductions in euthanasia rates and as much as 60 years for lower stabilized rates. This long-term timing is important to keep in mind. We want a negative/positive animal flow: fewer coming into shelters, more going out.

In the 1200s Leonardo Fibonacci created a formula (70%) that is still used by many scientists, including the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control. It states that 70% of a population must be vaccinated in order to prevent an epidemic of a contagious disease. In a pet overpopulation article Dr. Marvin Mackie proposes that "pet sterilization is 'vaccinating' against the disease of overpopulation." With the remaining 30% of the population, births occur at a rate only great enough to replace normal attrition. 70% sterilization has successfully been reached in some areas of our country. 70% - not a bit less - must be reached for progress to be made, otherwise our shelters continue to be the recipients of the hapless victims of too many births and too few homes. Dr. Mackie advocates targeting a reasonably sized area and quickly providing massive sterilizations to achieve the 70% goal.

Together we can make a change. Spay/neuter your own pets, offer to pay for the pet of a neighbor, schoolmate, church member, etc. "Civic groups can adopt a block" and help with transportation or fees in a target area. Be a part of the Solution (70% that is), not a part of the problem - spay and neuter your pets! Remember, "spay/neuter saves lives by eliminating killing."

- Many thanks to The Pet Savers Foundation and the Humane Society of the United States for providing much of the information in this article.

DID YOU KNOW?

- * Every day more than 10,000 people are born in the US
- * Every day more than 50,000 puppies and kittens are born in the US
- * Between 6 and 8 million cats and dogs enter shelters each year
- * Between 3 and 4 million cats and dogs are euthanized each year
- * There are MANY medical and behavioral benefits to having your pet spayed/neutered
- * It is much more humane and cost effective to spay/neuter
- * Medical procedures are extremely safe - you can spay/neuter your pets as young as 2 months
- * The Animal Mission provides discount spay/neuter vouchers for low-income pet owners each year as well as free vouchers for targeted high surrender zip codes