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John F. Kullberg

*The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)*

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NEW YORK CITY ANIMAL CONTROL: AN OVERVIEW

John. F. Kullberg, President  
 The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)  
 441 East 92nd Street  
 New York, NY 10128

The uniqueness of each of New York City's 5 boroughs is evident in a review of 1980 New York City Census Data (Table I). The borough of Queens, for example, has a population base showing a loss of only 4.8% in the 10 year period, 1970-80. In Bronx and Brooklyn, by contrast, the overall population has declined by more than 20% and 14% respectively during the same time period.

TABLE I

1980 NEW YORK CITY CENSUS DATA

	BROOKLYN	QUEENS	MANHATTAN	BRONX	STATEN ISL.	TOTAL
Households	828,257	711,940	704,502	429,257	14,574	2,788,530
1970-80 % Change	-5.5%	+3.2%	+2.5%	-13.7%	+32.9%	
Av. Persons/House	2.67	2.63	1.96	2.66	3.0	
# Persons	2,230,936	1,891,325	1,428,285	1,168,972	352,121	7,071,639
1970-80 % Change	-14.3%	-4.8%	-7.2%	-20.6%	+19.2%	-10.4%
Median Age	30.7	34.9	43.1	30.3	30.7	
Housing Units	880,980	736,678	754,416	450,957	118,829	2,941,860
Owner-Occupied	193,482	271,097	54,517	62,711	69,805	651,612
Renter-Occupied	634,775	440,843	649,985	366,546	44,769	2,136,918
% Renter-Occupied	72.1%	59.8%	86.2%	81.3%	37.7%	72.6%
Av. Hsld. Inc.	\$15,333	\$19,881	\$21,520	\$14,292	\$23,168	
Med. Hsld. Inc.	11,919	17,028	13,904	10,947	21,204	

Brooklyn is the city's largest borough with a population of approximately two and a quarter million. Of the housing units, 22% are owner-occupied. In the Bronx the percentage is lower, (14%) and in Queens it is much higher (almost 40%). This is an important factor when one considers that more than 99% of New York City rental leases forbid pet ownership unless specific permission is given by the landlord. It is often a slow process to acquire that permission since eviction due to "illegal" pet ownership has historically been a court-supported means for turning over apartments and increasing rents. However, a 1983 New York City Council ordinance now prohibits eviction because of pet ownership, provided certain guidelines are followed.

In addition to higher ownership of residences, Queens has higher average and median household income statistics than Brooklyn or the Bronx. Higher average income and greater owner-occupancy combine to make Queens a more stable living area than the Bronx or Brooklyn, factors which may encourage pet ownership. This tends to be supported by the ratio of New York City dog licenses per household sold in each of these 3 boroughs in 1982 (0.118 in Queens, 0.096 in Brooklyn, and 0.086 in the Bronx). Other factors adversely affect pet ownership in New York City. For example, many owner-occupied buildings are cooperatives and prohibit pet ownership. Smallness of space, relatively low overall household income levels, and other idiosyncrasies are also negative influences. For these and other reasons, the Market Research Corporation of America national pet population estimates (Table II) are probably not particularly accurate for New York City. The ASPCA estimates in Table III are considered more reliable.

Table II

National Pet Ownership Trends: 1972-1982

Market Research Corporation of America Update\*

	<u>DOGS</u>				
	<u>'72</u>	<u>'76</u>	<u>'80</u>	<u>'81</u>	<u>'82</u>
No. U.S. H'holds	64.7	72.2	77.9	79.8	82.1
% Owning	38.0	41.6	40.0	41.0	40.5
No. Dogs	36.1	43.6	46.1	48.3	48.1
No. H'holds Owning Dogs	24.5	30.0	31.2	32.7	33.3
	<u>CATS</u>				
	<u>'72</u>	<u>'76</u>	<u>'80</u>	<u>'81</u>	<u>'82</u>
No. U.S. H'holds	64.7	72.2	77.9	79.8	82.1
% Owning	20.8	23.8	24.1	26.5	27.0
No. Cats	25.5	36.6	36.8	40.8	43.9
No. H'holds Owning	13.5	17.2	18.8	21.1	22.2

\*All totals are in millions

TABLE III

1982 Market Research Corporation of America (MRCA)  
National Pet Population Estimates Applied to New York City

	BROOKLYN	QUEENS	MANHATTAN	BRONX	STATEN ISL.	TOTAL
Households	828,257	711,940	704,502	429,257	114,574	2,788,530
Households with Dogs (40.5%)	335,444	288,336	285,323	173,849	46,402	1,129,254
Households with Cats (27%)	223,629	192,224	190,216	115,899	30,935	752,903
1.33 Av. Dogs/Dog-Owning Household	446,141	383,487	379,480	231,219	61,715	1,502,041
1.7 Av. Cats/Cat-Owning Household	380,169	326,781	323,367	197,028	52,590	1,279,935
New York City Dogs Licensed, 1982	79,115	83,711	35,581	36,975	22,825	258,207
% of MRCA Est.	18	22	9	16	37	17
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ASPCA Estimates*						
% Dogs Licensed	45	50,167	60	40	65	48
Dogs Owned	175,811	167,422	59,302	92,438	35,115	530,088
Cats Owned	133,616	127,241	45,070	70,253	26,687	402,867
*Based on interviews with ASPCA dog licensing officers and including consideration of historical trends, residence accessibility, commission factor and cat estimates (76% of total of dogs owned) derived from ASPCA dog-cat turn-in rates (1982).						

Manhattan and Staten Island are considerably different from each other as well as from each of the other 3 boroughs. Staten Island has New York City's highest average and median house old incomes as well as the highest percentage of owner-occupied buildings (59%) compared to 7% for Manhattan which is the lowest percentage. Staten Island is New York City's only growing borough with over 20% more individuals in 1980 than in 1970. These factors make Staten Island's per capita pet ownership the highest of the 5 boroughs.

The relatively high average household income in Manhattan is mitigated by the fact that Manhattan is the most expensive of the 5 boroughs in which to live. Landlord influence on renter-occupied housing units and cost-of-living realities adversely affect Manhattan's pet ownership, particularly dog

ownership. The so-called "pooper scooper law," enforced largely by peer influence in Manhattan, may also have an adverse impact on dog ownership. For these and other reasons, although MRCA national estimates applied to Manhattan would suggest that the ASPCA in 1982 licensed only 9.4% of the actual owned dogs in that borough, the ASPCA's estimate of 60% is probably more accurate (Table III).

The foregoing underscores the difficulty of determining pet ownership trends in large urban areas without detailed surveys of the pet-owning population. Given its own financial constraints, the ASPCA has been unable to do this properly, although some data available through New York City's Bureau of Animal Affairs tends to support the ASPCA estimates.

Table IV shows a 20% decline in the number of dogs licensed over the last 10 years. This may be due to a number of factors. New York City is somewhat unique in abdicating its dog tax collection responsibility to a private humane society and ASPCA dog license officers do not have the perceived (by the public) authority that city tax collectors have. Summonses issued by ASPCA officers are also not taken seriously by the courts. Budgetary constraints, as well as need analyses led the ASPCA to close 3 of its 5 New York City animal control shelters in 1982, which may also have had an adverse impact on dog licensing. Finally, the dog population in New York City may be declining.

TABLE IV

New York City Dog Licenses Issued: 1974-1983

YEAR	MANHATTAN	BROOKLYN	BRONX	STATEN ISLAND	QUEENS	TOTAL
1974	46,416	88,268	46,153	26,537	101,776	309,150
1975	44,169	85,306	43,992	25,834	98,577	297,858
1976	40,446	81,226	41,525	24,966	92,523	280,686
1977	37,267	77,638	40,852	25,656	86,119	267,532
1978	39,144	79,037	42,324	24,290	87,746	272,541
1979	39,813	79,599	40,375	24,016	83,938	267,741
1980	40,058	77,446	40,058	24,035	85,458	267,055
1981	37,027	76,699	39,672	26,448	84,634	264,480
1982	35,581	79,115	36,975	22,825	83,711	258,207
1983	33,596	72,679	34,560	21,680	84,693	247,208
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10-Year Variance	-27.1%	-17.7%	-25%	-17.8%	-16.8%	-20%

The ASPCA operates the only shelters in New York City that never turn away an animal. The shelter statistics (Table V) show an almost 50% decrease in animals received since 1974. These figures are the best representation of

the total numbers of unwanted, injured and lost dogs. From 1974 until 1977 the ASPCA had four shelters in New York City and in 1978 a fifth was opened (probably accounting for an increase in animals received that year). From 1978 to 1982 (when the ASPCA closed three shelters) the volume again decreased steadily. Although a slight increase in unwanted animals as recorded in 1983, the downward trend over the last several years suggests that the volume will either stabilize or continue to decrease.

TABLE V

Animals Received by ASPCA New York City Shelters: 1974-1983

YEAR	DOGS	CATS	MISC.	TOTALS
1974	81,627	54,408	6,065	142,100
1975	70,042	48,308	5,555	123,905
1976	62,225	42,663	7,298	112,186
1977	61,033	40,260	4,788	106,081
1978	70,372	38,799	4,291	113,462
1979	60,752	36,412	4,881	102,045
1980	48,294	32,557	4,914	85,765
1981	40,664	32,743	4,857	78,264
1982	38,064	28,141	4,054	70,259
1983	39,639	30,310	4,851	74,800
TOTALS	572,712	384,601	51,554	1,008,867

10-Year Variance	-51.4%	-44.3%	-20%	-47.4%
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Table outlines the number of animals picked up as strays by ASPCA ambulances and those turned in by the public over the last ten years. In 1978 and 1979 an intensive effort was made to pick up strays by ASPCA stray round-up teams. From 1980 to 1983 when the ASPCA made less effort to pick up strays in the ASPCA ambulances, the public picked up more strays and turned them over to ASPCA shelters without ambulance assistance (Tables VI and VII). It is extremely difficult to catch street-smart long-term strays. As a result most animals retrieved by ASPCA stray round-up teams and injured animal rescue programs are owned animals that are allowed to wander or that have escaped from owner confinement. As indicated in Table VII, some 50% of the animals that the ASPCA receives each year are designated as stray, and only 4 to 5% of those animals are returned to their owners. Lack of compliance with New York City's dog license law, owner indifference or ignorance about what to do when an animal is lost contributes to the low percentage of strays returned to their owner.

TABLE VI

Animals brought by ambulance and by the public  
to ASPCA New York City Shelters: 1974-1983

YEAR	BY ASPCA AMBULANCES		RECEIVED FROM PUBLIC	
	#	%	#	%
1974	13,961	10	128,139	90
1975	8,045	6	115,860	94
1976	6,271	6	105,915	94
1977	8,935	8	97,146	92
1978	31,997	28	81,465	72
1979	29,235	29	72,810	71
1980	23,287	27	62,478	73
1981	17,086	22	61,178	78
1982	19,240	27	51,019	73
1983	22,516	30	52,284	70

TABLE VII

Stray Animals Received by ASPCA New York City Shelters: 1974-1983

YEAR	# STRAY	%	#STRAYS RTO*	%
1974	64,557	45	3,311	5
1975	55,830	45	2,915	5
1976	52,890	47	2,389	5
1977	48,013	45	2,383	5
1978	59,469	52	4,910	8
1979	50,372	49	3,221	6
1980	39,239	46	2,515	6
1981	35,510	45	1,562	4
1982	35,229	50	1,428	4
1983	38,302	51	1,539	4

RTO\* - Returned to Owner

Most of the dogs that are returned to their owners are licensed. For that reason, lost cats stand a very poor chance of being retrieved.

TABLE VIII

Animals, by Species, Returned to Owner by ASPCA Shelters,  
New York City: 1974-1978

YEAR	DOGS	CATS	MISC	TOTALS
1974	3,089	85	137	3,311
1975	2,786	82	47	2,915
1976	2,302	87	0	2,389
1977	2,334	39	10	2,383
1978	4,642	243	25	4,910
1979	2,878	333	10	3,221
1980	1,815	357	343	2,515
1981	1,257	285	20	1,562
1982	1,129	273	26	1,428
1983	1,253	266	20	1,539

The ASPCA operates the only shelters in New York City which accept all animals brought to them, many of which would be or have been rejected by humane societies that are only adoption agencies. This non-discriminatory policy contributes to a large percentage of ASPCA-received animals being euthanized. Fortunately more members of the public are coming to city pounds, ASPCA shelters and other private not-for-profit adoption agencies to look for adoptable animals. The neighbor, friend, pet shop and private breeder, however, are still the predominate sources of pet dogs and cats.

TABLE IX

Disposition of Animals Received by ASPCA New York City Shelters: 1974-1983

YEAR	ADOPTED	%	RETURNED TO OWNER	%	EUTHANIZED %
1974	10,610	8	3,311	2	90
1975	9,342	8	2,915	2	90
1976	7,191	6	2,389	2	92
1977	8,400	8	2,389	2	90
1978	12,001	11	4,910	4	85
1979	12,650	12	3,221	3	85
1980	17,913	21	2,515	3	76
1981	14,509	18	1,562	2	80
1982	12,130	17	1,428	2	81
1983	16,409	18	1,539	2	80



Although some 35,000 animals have been spayed or neutered by ASPCA veterinarians in New York City over the last 10 years (Table X), it is possibly incorrect to conclude that these spay/neuter programs have had a significant impact on the volume of free-roaming strays in the community. Responsible pet owners have their animals spayed or neutered while irresponsible pet owners do not. Spaying and neutering are not advisable until the animal is approximately six months of age and most animals are adopted prior to this. Thus, many animals are never spayed or neutered even when the operation is offered free as a bonus for adoption. Given the volume of ASPCA adoptions each year and limitations on volunteers and staff, it is impossible to enforce spay/neuter agreements in an effective way. Thus, although Table XI indicates that higher percentage of ASPCA adopted animals are being sterilized than ever before, one must question the actual impact on the number of unwanted animals. Other factors such as the state of the economy, lease constraints, life styles and size of living space probably have a much greater impact on the yearly fluctuations in unwanted animal populations than do spay/neuter clinics.

TABLE X

Spay/Neuter Operations Performed Annually  
at the ASPCA Henry Bergh Animal Hospital, Manhattan: 1974-1983

YEAR	ADOPTED FROM ASPCA	OTHERS	TOTAL
1974*	872	522	1,394
1975	1,039	690	1,729
1976	964	747	1,711
1977	991	858	1,849
1978	1,591	2,017	3,608
1979+	2,508	2,944	5,452
1980+	2,331	2,662	4,993
1981+	2,144	2,319	4,463
1982+	2,329	2,124	4,448
1983+	2,612	2,700	5,312
TOTAL	17,376	17,583	34,959

\* Figures for 1974 were projected, based on 10 months, March-December.

+ Includes cat neuters performed at ASPCA Shelter Veterinary Clinics.

TABLE XI

## ASPCA Adopted Animals that are Sterilized: 1974-1983

YEAR	ANIMALS ADOPTED	# STERILIZED	%
1974	10,610	872	8
1975	9,342	1,039	11
1976	7,191	964	13
1977	8,400	991	12
1978	12,001	1,591	13
1979*	12,650	2,508	20
1980*	17,913	2,331	13
1981*	14,509	2,144	15
1982*	12,130	2,324	19
1983*	13,409	2,612	19

(These figures reflect neither the number of animals that were spayed or neutered by private veterinarians participating in an ASPCA subsidized spay/neuter program nor animals spayed or neutered prior to adoption)

\* Includes cat neuters performed at ASPCA shelter veterinary clinics.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

Animal control efforts, particularly spay /neuter programs, have improved considerably over the last ten years. The following seven suggestions, if adopted, could accelerate this improvement, particularly in New York City.

1. Establish special administrative courts (tribunals) for animal-related infractions, including failure to register one's pet. Courts that primarily focus on human problems typically treat animal-related complaints lightly.
2. Establish a minimal pet registration fee (e.g. \$2.00 for 2 years). This should help increase compliance and shift funding for animal control programs to what is outlined in suggestion 4 below.
3. Set heavy fines for failure to register (e.g., \$25.00 first offense, \$50.00 second offense), further aiding compliance as well as helping to fund court costs.
4. Tax pet products (i.e., food and paraphernalia) at distribution (wholesale) point to pay for animal control services (shelters, ambulance rescue and stray round-ups, and spay-neuter clinics). Localities to receive money in proportion to animals registered (thus encouraging strict enforcement of registration laws). A pet product tax more equitably distributes animal control costs among all pet owners, not just dog owners.

5. Animal control must be the responsibility of municipalities, not humane societies. Municipalities should register animals and enforce registration and either perform or contract out (possibly to humane societies) animal control functions.

6. "Humane Societies" that only adopt out animals and actually make money on adoptions an adoption-related fund-raising should pay a tax on profits, with the tax used to support city animal control programs, including spay /neuter clinics and animal control education.

7. SPCA spay/neuter and law enforcement programs should receive public subsidies, particularly in the localities that leave animal control and/or anti-cruelty law enforcement responsibilities to SPCAs.