The course is four lessons, each including a reading assignment and worksheets to be completed and returned to the state office to be graded. There is a final exam, and those successfully completing the course are listed as Approved Humane Investigators for Virginia. Trainees pay only $150 for a booklet on Virginia animal regulations.

If you are interested in initiating such a program for your state (or if you are a humane investigator in Virginia and would like to take the course), contact W.O. Crutchfield, V.M.D., Department of Agriculture and Commerce, P.O. Box 4191, Lynchburg, Va. 24502, for more information.

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**The case for neutering**

by Susan MacKenzie, VMD

MacKenzie serves on the board of directors of the Tompkins Co. (N.Y.) SPCA. This article originally appeared in their newsletter, Tailbearer.

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A short pamphlet, "The Advantages of Neutering Pets," is available from Veterinary Medical Association of Tennessee, 200 Woodruff St., Suite 104, Nashville, Tenn. 37215.

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The Humane Society of the United States accredits humane societies and governmental animal control agencies that meet certain professional standards of operation. HSUS accreditation helps develop greater public respect for animal welfare and control agencies, in addition to assisting them with self-evaluation and improvement.

Five humane societies and one animal control agency have been accredited, and the program is expanding with a new staff member. Kathie Flood, former director of the Humane Society of Huron Valley (Mich.), an accredited society, has joined HSUS as a field agent for accreditation evaluation.

To be accredited, societies and agencies must provide humane care and handling of animals in the shelter and in the field, neuter all animals adopted and have active humane education and cruelty investigation programs. For the complete requirements, write HSUS Accreditation, 2100 L St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

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Most pet population control programs stress neutering of females, but it is equally important to neuter males. Although the male does not bear the young, one male can potentially produce more offspring in a lifetime than one female. Neutering is the removal of both testicles (castration) and is performed under general anesthesia by a veterinarian.

With an increase in the number of animals kept in close proximity, behavioral problems arise which may be prevented by castration. Male dogs and cats instinctively fight with other males of their species. These fights often lead to serious wounds. Castration greatly reduces intermale aggression, especially if performed when young. It may produce a more affectionate pet with less tendency to wander, yet does not reduce an animal’s effectiveness.

The decrease in the desire to roam becomes important for dog owners as more towns pass leash laws, and during hunting season, when special curfews may be imposed and a dog may be shot if seen running loose.

Unaltered male cats make poor housepets. Male cat urine has a potent odor and adult male cats often develop the habit of "spraying" the walls with urine if kept inside. These cats also possess a strong instinct to roam and therefore do not adapt well to confinement.

Besides decreasing the likelihood of fight wounds, neutering can prevent other medical problems such as infections and tumors of the testicles. Many older male dogs develop enlarged prostates. This causes discomfort when defecating and a predisposition to prostate infections, cysts, and abscesses. By removing the main hormonal influence on the prostate, castration greatly reduces the risk of these problems.

Other methods of controlling pet population are being developed, but none has yet been proven as safe or as effective as surgical neutering, and none provides the additional behavioral and medical benefits. For these reasons, surgical neutering remains the most practical method available today.

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The sad truth is that people do collect animals to sell to research laboratories. Peninsula Humane Society (Burlingame, Calif.) has issued a press release warning those individuals who try to find homes for animals to be alert to this practice.

PHS advises that potential adoptors should be asked for identification and business and personal references, and that these should be checked before turning over the animal.

If someone claims that an animal is their lost pet, the individual who found the animal should demand positive identification (say, a family photo with the animal) and should note the animal's behavior toward the person claiming it. If there is doubt about ownership, PHS says, don't surrender the animal.

PHS's public service message was carried by area newspapers.