

Just Wright

Pet sterilization: a good deal all around

by Phyllis Wright



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When the public questions the insistence of animal control professionals that pets be spayed or neutered, you can point out that pet sterilization benefits just about everybody.

The pet owner -- Although many pet owners still believe sterilization causes laziness and weight gain, neutering is clearly a benefit to the pet and pet owner in reducing roaming, fighting and other restless behavior and eliminating many diseases associated with reproductive organs. Pet owners must realize that sterilization improves pet health and behavior, and that an overweight pet is generally an overfed pet.

Animal control agencies and humane societies -- 2,000 to 3,500 dogs and cats are born each hour in the U.S. The job of animal control will become more and more massive unless each town and county takes steps to reduce animal reproductivity.

The City of Los Angeles has demonstrated that a program of city-sponsored neutering clinics teamed with public education and strict law enforcement can reduce the number of animals destroyed at city shelters -- from 111,000 in 1970-71 to 69,419 in 1977-78. A similar comprehensive program operated by the Vancouver Regional Branch of the British Columbia SPCA, including a sterilization clinic, has resulted in a 27% decrease in surplus animals destroyed by participating municipalities. During 1977, bitings by aggressive dogs were reduced by 41%.

The citizen-taxpayer without pets -- Non-pet owners may be the least aware of the benefits to themselves of pet sterilization. Reducing the number of animals processed through shelters helps stop the escalating costs of animal control. Better animal control also relieves all citizens of some of the problems of lawn damage from strays and the hazards of animals in city traffic.

People domesticated the dog and cat, and current over-population problems are long-range results of our activities. If your public argues that sterilization is "unnatural," explain that we are simply carrying out our responsibility as caretakers for the dogs and cats that we made a part of our culture. ■