Solving the Pet Overpopulation Problem

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Solving the Pet Overpopulation Problem

The HSUS Promotes Its Blueprint for Success

U.S. animal shelters must euthanatize up to 13 million unwanted animals every year. But the shelters that follow The HSUS’s simple formula of legislation, education, and sterilization (LES) report a decrease of between 30 and 60 percent in euthanasia rates!

For those few shelters, it’s been a successful fight to date. But for many others the battle is far from over. Further victories depend on your help. Each cat or dog that has a warm home and loving owners but is allowed to breed will eventually be the source of thousands more kittens or puppies. Most of these new lives will encounter only the cruelty and deprivation of being unwanted and homeless. The responsibility for this surplus rests on human shoulders.

Because of the short pregnancies and large litters of dogs and cats, one individual female with all her female offspring reproducing similarly can be the source of over 4,000 new lives within seven years. Some of these animals will find homes complete with laps to sit on and fireplaces to enjoy, but millions of other perfectly healthy dogs and cats won’t be so lucky. The overabundance of these potential pets tends to cheapen the intrinsic value of each individual animal in the eyes of the general public. The swelling problem causes some people to use cruel methods of disposing of unwanted pets, such as abandoning them along highways, or drowning them, regardless of the availability of an animal shelter.

Unfortunately, animal shelters are not always a guarantee of a homeless pet’s safety, either. Dealers, eager to take advantage of a readily available source of revenue, can buy animals from certain shelters for a few dollars a head and resell them at a profit to experimental laboratories. Tragically, it is not only unwanted animals that end up in a dealer’s truck; lost, unlicensed pets that are unclaimed at those animal shelters.

This puppy is part of the sad circle of overpopulation. If it is not adopted, it will die. If it is adopted and allowed to breed, it will produce more puppies which face homelessness. The HSUS has the step-by-step plan to break this circle. With your help, we can succeed.
shelters by their owners could also land in a laboratory.

The most cunning of a society's unwanted animals will survive on their own, picking food out of garbage cans, staying warm under parked cars, finding water where they can, and staying out of harm's way. They will also breed. Although somewhere in their lineage was a fluffy kitten or puppy delighting someone, they owe their adult pet the right to some homes for them.

The population of dogs and cats turned into animal shelters, however, are the result of unthinking or uneducated individuals who purposely breed their pets. They think that they can find homes for their new kittens or that the kittens or puppies can always go to the animal shelter. The harsh reality is that those animals have only a slim chance of being adopted. Most are euthanized because there are simply no homes for them.

Because of pet owner irresponsibility, too many unwanted animals are born each year only to meet tragic ends. Animal shelters are proving, however, that with The HSUS's program of legislation, education, and sterilization, they can decrease the number of animals they must kill. For example, an Ohio shelter that euthanized 2,913 animals in 1979 had to destroy only 1,151 in 1981 because it had folowed the LES plan. A California humane society reported a drop from 14,000 euthanized animals in 1972 to 4,373 in 1979. A Canadian shelter witnessed a drastic plummet from 80,000 in 1976 to 15,300 in 1981! The HSUS's plan works! Now we have to make it work in all our communities.

The LES plan is a three-pronged attack. No one single element can work alone.

It is vital that the first element in a society's program be legislation designed to mandate differential licensing (the license fee is less when the pet has been sterilized), leash laws, and sterilization of pets, particularly those adopted from public and private animal shelters. Cities are well aware of the immense public financial burden of pet overpopulation. The cost of taking strays off the streets, preventing rabies and dog bites, and picking up dead animals (12

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The third element in overpopulation control is, of course, sterilization. In addition to legislating mandatory neutering of all adopted shelter pets, communities can also provide several kinds of sterilization services. In many cases, cooperative programs with private veterinarians will offer spay and neuter services for a reduced fee. Local governments and humane societies can operate sterilization clinics. Many communities offer these services to pet owners regardless of their ability to pay.

It is possible to put a lid on pet overpopulation. The solution is no mystery. The HSUS has done the research and the legwork. Now we need your help to put our answers into action. If the HSUS can double the number of communities adopting this blueprint for success, in five years we can save five million unwanted animals from cruel treatment or early death.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Up to 13 million animals must suffer an early death in the United States because they do not have a home. Their numbers and tragedy are a national disgrace. But the solution is no mystery. The HSUS has the blueprint for successful pet overpopulation control. All you need to do is follow it and you can help eliminate a vast amount of suffering in your community.

- Talk to your government officials. Urge your legislators to pass mandatory sterilization laws and impress upon them the vital importance of establishing humane education programs. Send HSUS materials to your city council members. The first step to eliminating the suffering of animal overpopulation is through the front door of your municipal building.

- Educate your family, friends, and neighbors. Request a publications list from The HSUS detailing our educational materials. The HSUS publishes posters, ads, and pamphlets describing the importance of responsible pet ownership. Order some and distribute them in your schools, libraries, movie theaters, and supermarkets.

- Sterilize your own pets. Regardless of whether or not it has a home, every newborn puppy or kitten compounds the overpopulation problem.

- Finally, support The HSUS's efforts to spread this working blueprint for success around the country. We want to share this information with your community. Your help is critical if we are to continue developing educational materials, conducting classes throughout the country, and affecting local and national legislation. Please use the enclosed postage-paid envelope to send your gift to help The HSUS help animals!