Will Spaying and Neutering Become Obsolete?

By Geoffrey L. Handy

It's the year 2000. Your shelter has just received its first shipment of a new wonder-drug. It's an immunosterilant vaccine that will enable trained shelter personnel to sterilize female dogs and cats through injection.

You are just as excited as one year before, when your shelter first began using an injectable zinc compound to “neuter” male companion animals.

For your shelter, the invasive techniques of spaying and neutering are now practically obsolete. But they served you well. A mandatory spay/neuter law for your shelter, combined with effective enforcement techniques, had enabled your agency in 1996 to first
Overpopulation of companion animals.

Diane Allevato, Kate Rindy, Dr. Peter Theran.

Much work still lies ahead on unwanted companion animals, even for a basic cultural shift in the way the public views its duties and responsibilities toward animals—was the underlining theme of the 1990 HSUS Preconference Symposium.

Hope for the Future

A realistic picture? Perhaps. Many questions have to be answered before such a scenario ever becomes reality. Much work still lies ahead on chemical sterilants for domestic and wild animals, work that will probably take years to complete. In addition, these sterilants must meet acceptance by the cautious Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

When you’re looking into the eyes of unwanted animals at the shelter every day, though, hope for a better future is a large part of what keeps you going. And hope—for vastly reduced numbers of unwanted companion animals, even for a basic cultural shift in the way the public views its duties and responsibilities toward animals—was the underlining theme of the 1990 HSUS Preconference Symposium.

An Alternative to Surgical Neutering

“We are looking for a chemical sterilant that is effective, that is safe, that is inexpensive, and, finally, that is approved by the FDA,” said HSUS President John Hoyt to open the symposium.

Dr. Bruce Addison, microbiologist and president of Addison Biological Laboratory in Fayette, Missouri, believes he and his associates may have come up with just such a chemosterilant. “We feel there is a better way to neuter the male pet,” he said in his presentation. “We can achieve everything we would otherwise achieve with surgical castration, only much less invasive.”

Addison is associated with Dr. Mustafa S. Fahim, director of the University of Missouri’s Center of Reproductive Science and Technology. Over the past fifteen years, Fahim and his colleagues have studied the effects of the zinc ion on the male reproductive system. They have developed an injectable zinc compound that is trademarked under the name Neutersol. When injected into either the testicles or epididymis, according to Addison, Neutersol renders animals permanently sterile within 48 hours. Zero sperm count is achieved within two weeks. The single-injection procedure, Addison said, requires mild sedation on puppies and no anesthesia on adult animals, and the animal is ready to go home immediately after the injection. Because the compound is pH neutral, it causes virtually no discomfort to the animal.

When injected directly into the testicles, the testicular tissues shrink; within a month, the tissues are totally atrophied and the external continued next page

Perfecting Early Spay/Neuter

Chemical sterilants hold the most promise for the vast majority of animal shelters that don’t have their own clinics or staff veterinarians. These shelters must currently rely on mandatory spay/neuter laws and effective enforcement techniques to achieve 100 percent sterilization of adopted animals.

For those agencies with their own clinics or veterinarians, another option may be available: early spay/neuter, the term used to describe surgical sterilization of pets before they reach maturity. Some 50 shelters and clinics, in fact, have already instituted early spay/neuter programs. Sterilizing dogs and cats as young as eight weeks of age has one primary advantage: it can ensure close to 100 percent sterilization of animals adopted from the shelter.

Dr. Phyllis Wright, HSUS Vice President for Companion Animals, asked at the symposium, “Is early spay/neuter good for the animal?” Dr. Peter Theran, VMD, vice president for health and hospitals at the Massachusetts SPCA, presented the early results of studies that seek to answer that question.

“My goal is to make sure we send every adopted animal home sterilized,” Theran said. “But the goal is to make sure that in the process the animals are treated extremely well.”

To achieve those goals, Theran and his colleagues at the MSPCA’s Angell Memorial Animal Hospital in Boston are developing a protocol for safe spaying and neutering of animals as young as eight weeks of age.

They seek to establish 1) a battery of tests to ensure selection of only healthy animals for surgery; 2) a set of safe surgical preparation techniques; 3) a combination of drugs to use as pre-anesthetics and anesthetics that are not only safe and effective, but that also minimize stress for the puppies and kittens; 4) a means of assessing the post-operative status of animals; and 5) a follow-up program for determining the short- and long-term effects and risks of early spay/neuter. Their ultimate goal is to publish the protocol so that concrete, scientific data is readily available to groups that wish to establish early spay/neuter programs elsewhere.

Probably the most prohibitive challenge that lies ahead will be ensuring that the suspected long-term risks of early spay/neuter—such as changes in bone development and urinary incontinence—are no worse than those of spays and neuters at maturity and do not outweigh the procedure’s many benefits.

One other potential problem, especially with early spays of females, is the risk of unnecessary surgeries in the future by veterinarians unaware that the animals have already been altered. To help prevent that problem, the American Humane Association (AHA) has developed a tattoo registry for early spayed and neutered animals. AHA has come up with a standard identification tattoo that features a common symbol and a number assigned by AHA to identify the place of surgery.
Technological breakthroughs doubtless won’t signal a total end to the “litter problem.”

Pet Overpopulation: A Closer Look

By Kate Rindy, HSUS Associate, Companion Animals

I have been said that all of our efforts for animals, pet overpopulation is the easiest issue to work for. Why? Well, to activists it seems non-controversial—no trappers to offend, no hunters to stop, no large corporations to take on. Furthermore, this issue deals with our nation’s best friends: dogs and cats. What individual, physician, veterinarian, school principal, or family member wouldn’t mind participating in something that helps dogs and cats?

But many do mind, or so it seems, based on the numbers of unwanted animals coming into shelters each year. Every day, in every community across the country, dogs and cats—our best friends—are euthanized in shelters because there are not enough homes for them all.

Pet overpopulation occurs one animal, one litter at a time. It is neither easy nor non-controversial, and the solutions lie in the hands of those who create the problem.

So who “creates” the problem? Who and where are they?

“They” are pet owners who allow their pets to breed for any reason. “They” are hobby breeders, who have purchased a purebred and wish to recoup their investment. “They” are professional breeders, whose animals, generations down the line, end up unwanted in the shelter. “They” are puppy-mill owners, who claim that they are simply supplying a demand made by the public.

Indirectly, “they” are many veterinarians, regarded by most as pet “experts,” but who do not do their part to encourage spaying and neutering. “They” are municipal leaders who believe it is less costly to fund shelters than spay/neuter clinics. “They” are the major pet food companies, which do a great deal to convince the American public that they should have a pet—especially a puppy or kitten. “They” are animal shelters that allow any animal to be adopted who is not spayed or neutered and is not placed in a “lifelong, loving home.” “They” are also individual pet owners who give up or turn loose their adult animals—making up over 50 percent of the unwanted animals in shelters. These are not puppies and kittens, not litters of animals, but one single adult dog or cat to be turned over to a shelter. One at a time, these adult animals fall into the “problem” that is pet overpopulation. But the problem is not animals—the problem is people.

Convincing any of these people that they are responsible for pet overpopulation seems next to impossible. And yet, most of them, when questioned, would say that pet overpopulation is a tragedy. Why, then, if they think it is terrible that millions of animals are euthanized annually in shelters, don’t they see their role in the problem?

Well, how many people do you know who like hearing that they’re responsible for killing their “best friends”? How many backyard breeders—or professional breeders, for that matter—keep track of their animals’ litters for more than one generation to see just how many end up unwanted? How many veterinarians are aware of the numbers and sources of animals coming into shelters and then make the connection between those litters and the intact male dogs and cats they routinely treat? 
First Animal Care Expo Planned for 1992

By Rhonda Lucas Donald

You know about natural pet foods. But where can you get samples of them and find out if these products have any practical use in an animal shelter? Who makes environmentally safe chemicals good for shelter use? Where can you see the latest in contemporary shelter design and equipment? Where can you hear an expert explain housing and why vaccines and other drugs work in animals? Where can you see the largest ‘idea store’ for shelters that I know of, ‘he says.

The site of the first Animal Care Expo will be Bally’s Grand Hotel in Las Vegas. Nevada, February 2-5, 1992.

The Animal Care Expo is for everyone involved in animal care. With demonstrations, seminars, and the latest in practical, energy-efficient, contemporary, and humane equipment and services, this Expo will provide participants with an exclusive opportunity to use products and services for humane societies and animal control agencies, sponsored by The HSUS. And the location promises to be nearly as exciting as the Expo: Bally’s Grand Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada, February 2-5, 1992.

The Animal Care Expo is for everyone involved in animal care. With demonstrations, seminars, and the latest in practical, energy-efficient, contemporary, and humane equipment and services, this Expo will provide participants with an exclusive opportunity to discuss products with designers, manufacturers, and marketing experts. Those involved in animal control, sheltering, kennel or shelter construction and operation, wildlife rehabilitation, veterinary practice, and any other animal care field will be introduced to products, information, and contacts that will enable them to do the best and most efficient job of caring for animals.

Exhibits and educational seminars featuring experts on a wide spectrum of topics that are not typically offered at animal control and sheltering seminars will give participants the details and knowledge they need to bring plans for the 90s into sharper perspective. Special emphasis will be given to products and supplies that are environmentally friendly and safe. There will be even be a wholesaler to recycling in the shelter.

John Dommers, who is coordinating the Expo for The HSUS, says there will be many hard-to-find and specialty items at this show. "It will be the largest ‘idea store’ for shelters that I know of," he says.

Here are just a few examples of the types of exhibits that will be represented: nutritional products, mobile communications, computer programs, books, videos, investigative equipment, educational materials, vehicles, animal handling equipment, ID systems, uniforms, disease and sanitation supplies, kennel and flooring components, fund-raising and promotional items, wildlife rehabilitation supplies, and professional and state association exhibits.

If you have not already received a mailing about Animal Care Expo ‘92, please request information from The HSUS at 2100 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20037. More details will follow in subsequent mailings and in upcoming bulletins in Shelter Sense. Plan now to attend the trade show designed and offered just for you.

Shelter Agrees to $425,000 Settlement in Fatal Attack by Wolf-dog Hybrid

By Dr. Randall Lockwood, Ph.D., HSUS Vice President for Field Services

In the largest settlement ever made by a humane society for damages for an attack by a dog adopted from a shelter, the Panhandle Animal Welfare Society (PAWS, 742 Lovejoy Rd., Pt. Walton Beach, FL 32548) agreed last October to pay $425,000 to the family of a four-year-old boy fatally mauled by a wolf-dog hybrid. The animal had been adopted from the society just two hours before the attack. The case has caused many agencies to reevaluate their adoption policies and their treatment of wolf hybrids and other potentially dangerous animals.

The animal involved in the incident was a five-year-old, 75-pound, neutered male wolf-husky mix named Chief. PAWS had received Chief on September 12, 1988. According to investigators' reports from the Okaloosa County Sheriff’s Office, Chief had been owned for about three months by a family with two small children. Prior to that he had been owned by an unidentified person living at Eglin Air Force Base, where he was “left on a chain outside for long periods of time, in all types of weather.” He was reportedly surrendered to PAWS because his owners were planning to move and no longer had enough room for him. In addition, there had been complaints from neighbors about howling.

According to Don Anchors, the attorney for PAWS, at least four staff members at the animal shelter had an opportunity to observe and interact with the animal. None noticed any characteristics that suggested to them that the animal was...
Since Nathan Carpenter’s death, at least four other children have been killed by wolf hybrids.

Dangerous.

Chief was advertised in the local newspaper as “Pet of the Week—Gentle Giant—Well-behaved” in an announcement that identified him as a wolf hybrid. He was adopted on September 19th, but was returned the next day because he had chewed all the furniture in his new owner’s apartment.

He was adopted again on September 22nd by a couple with no children. According to Sheriff’s reports, the animal was brought home at 1:30 p.m. and placed in a fenced yard while the new owner went to get groceries, including dog food. Shortly after that, Chief apparently jumped the four-foot fence. At 3:00 p.m., he was seen on the street a few blocks away by Sharon Carpenter.

She noticed his collar and tags (from a previous owner) and was able to get a name and telephone number from the tags. As she opened the gate to go back inside to call, Chief ran through the gate into her back yard where her four-year-old son Nathan was playing. Since she assumed he was someone’s pet, she was not concerned.

While on the phone, Mrs. Carpenter heard sounds of an attack and ran to her son’s aid. The boy had already received serious damage to his throat. Emergency teams arrived quickly and began administering CPR. Chief was still in the yard. When he approached an emergency worker in a threatening manner, he was struck by a flashlight and ran off through the open gate.

The animal was later shot by a Sheriff’s deputy while approaching a crowd of children and adults that had gathered at the scene. Nathan Carpenter was rushed to Humana Hospital in nearby Ft. Walton Beach, where he underwent emergency surgery. He died at 5:05 that evening.

The HSUS was contacted by attorneys for PAWS, its insurance carrier, and the Carpenter family, and cooperated with all parties by supplying background information on wolf hybrids and dog-related fatalities. The HSUS was not, however, involved in any of the legal discussions that followed this tragedy.

Richard Powell, attorney for the Carpenter family, filed a lawsuit against PAWS. In the course of pursuing the lawsuit, he discovered that, under the conditions of the PAWS adoption contract, PAWS retained ownership of the animal until he had been examined by a veterinarian. When presented with a certificate of examination, PAWS would sign a form transferring ownership to the adopting party. The trial judge, in response to a motion for summary judgement, ruled that PAWS was the legal owner of Chief at the time of the attack. Under Florida’s dangerous dog statute, the owner of a dog causing injury has strict liability for damages (two exceptions that did not apply in this case). In other words, it is not necessary to prove that the owner was negligent in allowing the attack to occur.

The Carpenter family wished to avoid the trauma of a trial and the case was taken to mediation. Following mediation, PAWS agreed to a $425,000 settlement, while denying any liability for the attack.

The incident, and the subsequent settlement, have added to the controversy surrounding wolf hybrids as pets. Since Nathan Carpenter’s death, at least four other children have been killed by wolf hybrids. The HSUS strongly recommends against breeding or keeping such animals as pets, and the HSUS guidelines for shelter adoptions specifically advise against offering any wolf-dog hybrid for adoption.

While the beauty and intelligence of wolf hybrids make them attractive to many people, their size, strength, curiosity, timidity, and instability make them inappropriate household pets. Most hybrids retain the instincts that have made the wolf one of the most successful predators on the planet. Yet without careful socialization, they may not learn to distinguish between people, especially infants and toddlers, and prey. Most fatal dog or wolf-hybrid attacks involve very young children who, like prey, are killed while running from the animal.

Most wolf hybrids live out their lives locked indoors or chained up outside. Most of these animals escape at some point, and The HSUS has received many reports of hybrids hit by cars or killed while roaming at the edge of town. Unfortunately, there are between 100,000 and 300,000 hybrids in this country, many of whom will end up in shelters. There are only a handful of sanctuaries or rescue leagues that are equipped to meet the needs of these animals, and there are few, if any, openings. As a result, the only option open to most shelters seeking to protect the interests of these animals, the public, and their organization, is euthanasia.

The best way to prevent future tragedies, for both people and the hybrids themselves, is to strongly discourage the breeding and ownership of hybrids. The desire to own something “exotic” is almost always a very selfish one. With a little guidance from an adoption counselor, those seeking a wolf hybrid should see that the qualities of beauty, intelligence, and affection that make a hybrid appealing are also evident in many “ordinary” dogs at the shelter.

Reward Works in Livestock Shooting

By Rhonda Lucas Donald

When Kathy Morrissette and her husband went to feed and tend their farm animals last Thanksgiving, they found their cow down with a gunshot wound and their horse and pony also shot. The cow’s wounds were so severe that she and her unborn calf had to be euthanized. Another nursing calf also had to be euthanized because she was too young to survive without her mother. The horse had been shot in the neck, the bullet lodged so that any attempt to remove it would endanger his life. The pony suffered shots in the neck and jaw. One shot had left shrapnel in the jaw that couldn’t be removed without pulling the pony’s teeth, with which he couldn’t survive.

Police knew the shootings were not accidental. Both equines were wearing red plaid blankets, and a fence surrounded the pasture that the Morrissettes leased on Larrabee Farm in Auburn, Maine. Empty beer cans were found in the area. No witnesses came forth. But Morrissette was not content to let the criminals get away with hurting her animals. She and her husband decided to put up a $600 reward for information leading to the arrest and successful prosecution of those who shot the animals.

When Morrissette approached the local newspapers to publish her reward announcement, the papers were eager to cover the story. In all, five articles appeared, all running the reward information. Morrissette also posted reward signs in the local bars, taverns, gun shops and guns shops in the area. In the meantime, contributors added to the reward fund, eventually bringing it to over $2,000. The idea paid off two and a half weeks later when someone came forward.

Authorities learned that three juveniles and one 18-year-old were involved in the shooting. One of the juveniles, who had tried to stop the others, was not prosecuted. A friend he told the story to was the one who came forward with the information. The informant spoke out in order to obtain the reward money.

Trial proceedings revealed that the eldest boy drove the car but did not shoot at the animals. He received six months in jail (30 days suspended)
AVMA Honors SPCA Veterinarian

Lawrence W. Bartholf, DVM, was named the first recipient of the Animal Welfare Award, presented by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) at its Animal Welfare Forum last November 9 in Chicago, Illinois.

Dr. Bartholf, an active member of the Ulster County SPCA (UPO 124, Brabant Rd., Kingston, NY 12401), was instrumental in the rescue and rehabilitation of hundreds of animals in the nation’s largest animal cruelty case in recent years—the Animals’ Farm Home case in Ellenville, New York.

Following a 1987 complaint from a former employee of the Animals’ Farm Home, the New York State Humane Association (NYSHA) and the local humane societies, the Ulster County District Attorney obtained a warrant and conducted an unannounced inspection of the premises (See Shelter Sense articles from June/July 1988 and April 1989). Dr. Bartholf participated in the inspection to provide expert testimony about the conditions of the animals living there.

Hundreds of animals, including cats, dogs, horses, farm animals, wildlife, and birds, were living in a deplorable state: animals were unfed and without water, sanitation was poor, and parasite infestation and disease were rampant. After the inspection, Dr. Bartholf worked with humane groups to provide medical care and treatment, saving the lives of hundreds of animals.

“In the face of tremendous adversity, Dr. Bartholf provided inspiration to all of the volunteers and one year’s probation. The two sixteen-year-olds who actually shot the animals each received one month in jail, probation until age 21, mandatory alcohol and drug counseling, random drug testing until age 21, a suspended sentence of living in a youth center until age 21, and prohibition of possessing firearms until age 21. All three had to share in paying the $1,800 restitution to the Morrissettes for the loss of their animals.

In addition to the satisfaction of finding and prosecuting those who shot her animals, Morrissette is very pleased that the horse and pony are doing well so far. Morrissette was gratified to receive support from other community members, the Maine Federation of Humane Societies, and the local papers, which provided such thorough coverage of the story.

Many say that rewards don’t work. Here is a case of one that did. Frank Ribaudo, program director for The HSUS New England Regional Office, says that “in rural areas where law enforcement or animal control officers are scarce, a person has to do everything possible if justice is to be served.”

ITEMS

AVMA Honors SPCA Veterinarian

John Macy, the businessman from Vermont who has put his concern for chained dogs into a program of action (Shelter Sense, March 1989), has received the AVMA’s Animal Welfare Award.

Here in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, where winters are not unusually severe but certainly not mild, those who chain dogs often fail to provide adequately built dog houses. The cold spells here are not cold enough to kill the dogs, but the animals certainly suffer. Local and state laws do not adequately define shelter requirements. Desiring to alleviate the winter misery for dogs, I have donated straw for dog houses and have also made simple repairs on ramshackle dog houses that have come to my attention. The straw, which I “happen to have with me as I was passing by,” becomes my foot in the door, so to speak, with the owner.

Sadly, a chained dog lacking in shelter is usually also lacking in the other areas of care, too. I try to talk to the owners about the needs and feelings of dogs. Although the owners usually give lip service to the truth of what I say, they rarely exhibit the will to make further improvements in their dogs’ lives. But, believing that humane education has to start somewhere, I try to keep the channels of communication open between myself and the dog owners, checking in with them from time to time, letting them know that I am willing and able to help in various ways.

In one particular situation, my husband and I were highly satisfied with the results of our efforts, not only because two large chained dogs are now living a more comfortable life (in an enclosure), but because I was able to get the owner who worked on the farm after the raid,” said Barbara Cassidy, HSUS Director of Animal Sheltering and Control. “It was only through his care and attention that Ulster County SPCA was able to ultimately adopt out as many of the surviving animals as it did. His care and commitment extended far beyond the boundaries of regular practice,” she added.

Dr. Bartholf has been an SPCA volunteer veterinarian for more than 15 years. He also operates a large-animal practice in Greenfield, New York, and is an active member of the AVMA.

Recognizing that animal welfare is a daily responsibility for veterinarians, the AVMA initiated the Animal Welfare Award to acknowledge veterinary commitment to animal care. The award is presented to a veterinarian who has advanced animal well-being, shown exemplary dedication to animal care, and contributed to the community and society.

A Reader Writes to Shelter Sense

Thank you for opening the topic of alleviating the misery of dogs chained for life, and especially for sharing the heartwarming story of John Macy, the businessman from Vermont who has put his concern for chained dogs into a program of action (Shelter Sense, March 1989).

Over the past few years, I also have made attempts to alleviate the misery of chained dogs in some situations that have come to my attention.

Here is a case of one that did. Frank Ribaudo, program director for The HSUS New England Regional Office, says that “in rural areas where law enforcement or animal control officers are scarce, a person has to do everything possible if justice is to be served.”
female dog spayed as a result of the effort!

I heartily recommend that fellow members of the humane community make the effort to improve the life of at least one chained dog. There are those who, for many different reasons, will not feel they can do this. Perhaps for them the possibility exists through a one-to-one effort to get somebody else's dog spayed, thus preventing the birth of free puppies to be given away or forced upon owners who have no real desire or incentive to provide a good home and who would condemn a dog to life on a chain. — Clova Abrahamson

Enclosure Boosts License Renewals

There's a publication that every owner of a licensed dog in Marin County, California, gets once a year. It's called The Barking Times, a one-page "newsletter" that features educational information, a columnist named Bark Twain, and even a chance to win free dog food or a free spay/neuter service. The Times is free, too, because it comes as an insert with the dog license renewal notice the dog owner receives in the mail. "Two years ago, we took over dog licensing from the county tax collector's office," says Pat Miller, director of operations for the Marin Humane Society (171 Bel Marin Keys Blvd., Novato, CA 94949). "As we revamped the program, we realized that license renewal notices were an excellent vehicle for education.

So they came up with the Times. Produced with the help of desktop publishing software, the insert features short articles on such topics as pet overpopulation, urban wildlife, and barking dogs. One regular feature is an open letter about various topics from Bark Twain, a shelter dog and columnist. The enclosure, which is changed four times a year, always includes general information such as the society's shelter hours and low-cost spay and neuter services.

Realizing, as she put it, "that enclosures tend to become unread throwaways," Miller and her staff provided an added attraction to the Times to encourage people to read the material. They incorporated a prize giveaway into each month's mailing. "Hidden" within each newsletter are about ten license numbers. A pet owner who discovers his or her dog's license number in the written copy can call the society to claim either a free spay/neuter surgery or a 40-pound bag of dog food.

Miller says they receive from one to three responses to each month's mailing—which indicates that most dog owners read the enclosure—and believes that the inserts have contributed to an increase in licensed dogs over the past two years of about 2,000. "We've received a number of positive comments from dog owners," said Miller. "We believe that the informal, lightly humorous approach in The Barking Times can help overcome the bureaucratic image of dog licensing and make the process a little more palatable for them."

Shelter Sense for Everyone in NY

In an effort to get Shelter Sense to as many shelters as possible, The New York State Humane Association (NYSHA) recently funded subscriptions for 62 executive directors and board presidents of New York animal shelters who did not already receive it. Samantha Mullen, public affairs and programs administrator for NYSHA, explains the initiative to help expand Shelter Sense's readership in New York State: "Helping to put Shelter Sense into the hands of individuals responsible for shelter operations is, for NYSHA, a particularly gratifying example of synergy at work. Shelter Sense serves as both a primer for those just learning about shelter management and as a continuing education resource for experts in the field. Every issue of Shelter Sense I've ever read contains information that is indispensable for the humane and efficient operation of animal control facilities. Collaborating with The HSUS to share that information with the organizations that can best profit from it is among the most productive ways I can envision for NYSHA to help animals."

Mullen hopes that other state organizations will follow suit and "help disseminate The HSUS' 'encyclopedia of animal sheltering and control' in a similar manner. And the Shelter Sense staff will be glad to help. For more information on providing subscriptions to other humane agencies, please contact Shelter Sense at 5430 Gourvenor Lane, Suite 100, Bethesda, MD 20814; (301) 571-8989.

Materials

Novel ID Tag Protects Cats

Cats and their owners who dislike standard hanging identification tags now have a novel solution. They're called Tabby Tags, alternative ID labels that attach directly to cats' collars. These durable, comfortable tags will never hang in cats' food or water bowls and are designed not to get caught on anything.

Each Tabby Tag consists of a small label for ID information and a clear plastic tube that permanently shrinks when heated. The pet owner first writes ID information on the self-stick label and affixes it to the pet's collar. (The owner can write for a free computer-produced ID label as well.)

The cat owner then slides the plastic tube—which is designed to fit most 3/8" collars—over the collar and label like a sleeve. He or she can then use a hair blow-dryer to heat-shrink the tubing snugly onto the collar.

Cat owner Linda Winterburn got the idea of producing Tabby Tags after her cat Squeak kept trying to get rid of her dangling ID tag by pulling her collar off. Winterburn decided to replace the hanging tag by taping a small return address label to Squeak's collar. After a year of tape, she came up with the prototype tag using heat-shrink tubing.

Public and private shelters can order Tabby Tags at the special rate of $1.65 each, postage paid. At a suggested retail price of $3.99 each, the tags are ideal for use as a fundraiser in the shelter lobby. Shelters might also want to provide a tag-free-of-charge to each cat adopter.

Orders of 36 tags (total cost $59.40) come with a
countertop display box, but each tag is also packaged for display on a wall rack. Send orders, on agency letterhead to receive the discount rate, to Winterburn Enterprises, 4566 El Camino Real, B-10, Suite 340, Los Altos, CA 94022.

Reprint of Flea Article Available

Controlling Fleas At Home, an article first published in the February 1990 Shelter Sense, is now available as a reprint for distribution to pet owners in your community. The article presents a safe and effective home flea control program, and includes a helpful chart for pet owners listing insecticides commonly used in flea control. The five-page, two-color reprint contains several changes from the original article. Foremost among these is a revision in The HSUS's stance on use of the citrus extract d-limonene for flea control. The HSUS believes that d-limonene is relatively safe for cats.

Reprints cost 30 cents each. Quantity prices are as follows: $6.50 for 50 copies; $10 for 100 copies; and $30 for 500 copies. Prices include postage. Send orders with payment to HSUS, 2100 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20037.

Job Announcements

Advertisements are free and limited to job openings in humane organizations or animal control departments. Ads must be submitted on your organization’s letterhead no later than five weeks before the month of the issue in which you want your ad to appear. Please limit announcements to 50 words (including address). Sorry, Shelter Sense cannot print “position wanted” ads.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR—Needed by dynamic, 70-year-old organization to direct complete operations. College degree required; management, supervisory, fundraising, public relations, animal welfare experience preferred. Salary: $25,000 plus benefits. Send resume, salary history by Feb. 15 to Search Committee, Dane County Humane Society, 2250 Pennsylvania Ave., Madison, WI 53704.

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS—To serve under executive director. Extensive management experience in the animal welfare field and related bachelor’s degree required. Responsibilities include everything from personnel management to program development. Salary commensurate with experience. Send resume, references to Doyle Nor- dyke, Exec. Dir., Humane Society of Austin & Travis County, P.O. Box 1386, Austin, TX 78767.

SHELTER MANAGER—For full-service city animal shelter. Qualifications: BS degree, six years experience, effective communication and strong public relations skills. Salary negotiable. Send resume to City of Memphis, Employment Bureau, 125 N. Main, Room 1B-33, Memphis, TN 38103.

VETERINARY TECHNICIAN/KENNEL SUPERVISOR—For a humane society handling 14,000 animals yearly. Experience in all aspects of kennel care and management preferred. Send resume, salary history to Norfolk SPCA, 916 Ballentine Blvd., Norfolk, VA 23504.

SHELTER MANAGER—Established shelter in semi-rural upstate New York seeks innovative, compassionate person to handle daily operations and expanding programs. Previous shelter experience required, with knowledge of pet placement, public relations, animal care and control, personnel management, and cruelty investigation. Salary negotiable. Send resume to the address below.

ANIMAL CARE TECHNICIAN—For the shelter above. Duties include medical check-ups, inoculations, and follow-up care for shelter animals, with some emergency response and euthanasia duties. Send resume to Laura-Ann Cammissa, Columbka-Green Humane Society, Box 424, Hudson, NY 12534.
Reuniting Lost Pets with Owners
By Phyllis Wright, HSUS Vice President for Companion Animals

The new year gives us all a chance to reevaluate our programs and services and their impact on the animal problems in the community. Ask yourself how to improve the things you do in your daily work at the shelter and with the public. Remember that good intentions alone will not help animals unless you have a plan of action to reach the goals you set.

One area I would like to see improve is returning lost pets to their owners. I think many shelters place too much emphasis on adopting animals and not enough on helping those who are lost find their homes again. Your obligation in helping lost pets does not stop with the phone call you get from the pet owner. If you accept phone calls for missing pets, you must have a plan for following up on each call you take. I hate going into a shelter and seeing stacks of lost pet cards collecting dust on a shelf. I would rather see shelters not accept lost pet reports than give pet owners a false sense of security when they do call and no follow-up is done on their report.

Every day it should be someone’s responsibility to match lost pet descriptions with the animals in the shelter. This person should also go through the lost pets column in the classifieds. Set a goal to reach more of the public with news of stray and other potentially lost pets that you take in. Use radio time on a local station with a brief message of the pets found that day. I used to get air time during the morning show and at lunch time with such reports. I never had to pay for the messages. Take advantage of space in newspapers, including the free tabloids that go out weekly in many communities. And urge people to call the shelter immediately if their pet is missing—even for a short time. Let them know that waiting two or three days to call in may cost the pet his or her life.

Challenge your staff to increase the numbers of returned pets by at least 15 percent on a monthly basis. You could even offer an incentive such as a day off with pay to the employee who reunites the most pets with their owners. Concentrate on doing this one thing as thoroughly as you can and keep track of how it helps reduce the number of animals you must euthanize.