

Planetary Wellbeing

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Be a Pet Hero: Champion Spaying and Neutering!

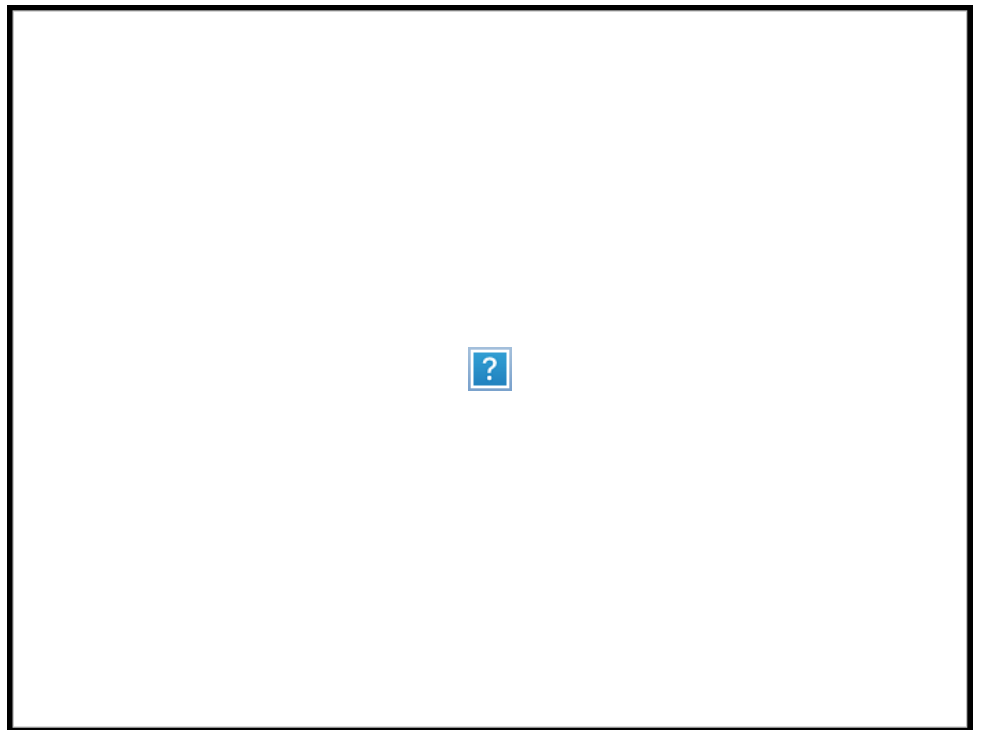
Every year, millions of stray and unwanted animals end up in shelters, but because of pet overpopulation only half finding loving new homes. For those left behind, euthanization too often becomes the tragic response. At Hearts, we're passionate about animal welfare and want to make it easier for us all to fight the pet overpopulation and animal cruelty problems! Let's make spaying and neutering the default at home, throughout America, and around the world.

Quick Guide: Why There's a Companion Animal Overpopulation Problem

- **Animal shelters are really overcrowded:** Of the 163 million pet cats and dogs in the US, one out of 20 ends up in a shelter each year – that's 8 million stray animals! ^[i] ^[ii]
- **Most pets in shelters are adoptable, wantable!** Many of the animals found in shelters are healthy and adoptable. ^[iii] In fact, most of the reasons people relinquish their pets have nothing to do with serious, unresolvable problems. ^[iv]
- **A sad 50% are euthanized:** Nearly 50% of stray animals are euthanized, ^[v] up to 300,000 every year in some states. ^[vi] For American cats and dogs, euthanasia is the leading cause of death. ^[vii]
- **Spay and neuter numbers remain low:** Cats have 45 times more babies than humans (up to 12 kittens annually); dogs 15 times. ^[viii] ^[ix] Yet, 35% of pet owners still refuse to spay and neuter their pets. ^[x]
- **You'll save money by sterilizing:** Average costs to spay and neuter range from \$145 to \$200, ^[xi] but it costs less to spay and neuter your pet than it does to raise a litter of kittens or puppies for a year! ^[xii] Sterilized animals are also healthier, have fewer painful infections, fatal diseases, and overall longer life, which means lower vet bills. ^[xiii]
- **America saves money with sterilization:** US taxpayers pay up to billions of dollars on pet overpopulation management, largely due to costs of euthanization, ^[xiv] ^[xv] but also to treat bites, attacks, and transmittable diseases, ^[xvi] as well as property damage, disposal of animal waste in public spaces, and responding to public disturbances. ^[xvii]

Take Action! Limit Pet Overpopulation

1. **Today, spay and neuter your pet:** As [SNAP](#) likes to say, "No birth is the first step to no kill"! Spaying and neutering your pet is the most important thing you can do to reduce overpopulation and prevent animal cruelty. Find out the [best time to spay or neuter your pet](#), choose a clinic, then find out how to prepare your animal companion for the big day by asking for pre-surgery instructions.
2. **Remember to spay and neuter your other pets:** Remember to have your other pets spayed or neutered, including rabbits, hamsters, and so on.
3. **A Guide to affordable spay and neuter programs:** If budget is a concern, use the tools provided by the [Humane Society](#) (also the [Humane Society of Canada](#)), the [ASPCA](#), the [MEOW Foundation](#), or this [Low Cost or Free Spay-Neuter Programs in the United States database](#) to find a low-cost spay and neuter program near you. Or search online for local subsidized spay and neuter programs in your community.
4. **Don't let immobility stop you: Guide to mobile spay/neuter clinics:** These roving low-cost and free spay and neuter programs offer people who have limited means of transportation a way to have their pets spayed or neutered near home. There are many programs offered by various organizations, including the [ASPCA Mobile Spay/Neuter Clinics](#), [PETA's Mobile Clinics Division](#), [The Neuter Scooter](#), or [SNAP](#).
5. **Stop overpopulation in developing countries:** Some of the poorest countries in the world have serious pet overpopulation and animal cruelty problems. Support programs that provide safe, affordable spaying and neutering worldwide, including [Vets Without Borders](#), [World Vets](#), [Animal Spay/Neuter International](#), and the [World Spay Day](#).
6. **Stop overpopulation by adopting a pet:** Americans are animal lovers – we add 17 million new pets to our families each year. Unfortunately, only about 20% adopt. ^{xviii} Instead of buying from a puppy mill or pet store, start your search for an animal companion online by looking for [adoptable pets](#) from [animal shelters or humane societies](#) near you.
7. **Donate to local animal shelter spay/neuter programs:** An estimated 3,500 animal shelters currently exist in the US. ^{xix} It costs money to spay and neuter strays and shelter them until they have homes. Give financial gifts to one of the programs above to make affordable spay and neuter programs more readily available, or [find](#) and get in touch with a local shelter to see how you can help.
8. **Become an advocate for humane pet population control:** If taking a stand to protect animals and prevent animal cruelty is of interest to you, but you're not sure how to start, the ASPCA's [Lobbying 101](#) is a great resource.



Dig Deeper: Pet Overpopulation and Animal Cruelty

- Read the answers to some [frequently asked questions](#) and dispel common [myths about spaying and neutering pets](#) to learn more spay/neuter issues and terminology.
- Follow some of the [studies](#) being done on shelter populations, pet overpopulation and pet relinquishment.
- For the teacher in you, here's a [Pet Overpopulation in the United States Lesson Plan](#) designed for grades 6-9.

Images by [potreporting](#) and [MendocinoAnimalCare](#)

^[i][Pet Overpopulation](#). (n.d.). Retrieved from American Humane Association: <http://www.americanhumane.org/animals/adoption-pet-care/issues-information/pet-overpopulation.html>

^[ii] (Pet Overpopulation)

[iii] (HSUS Pet Overpopulation Estimates)

[iv] *The Top Ten Reasons for Pet Relinquishment to Shelters in the United States.* (n.d.). Retrieved from National Council on Pet Population Study & Policy: <http://www.petpopulation.org/topten.html>

[v] (Pet Overpopulation)

[vi] *Why You Should Spay or Neuter Your Pet.* (n.d.). Retrieved from The Humane Society of the United States: http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/pet_overpopulation/facts/why_spay_neuter.html

[vii] (Pet Overpopulation)

[viii] *Benefits of Spay/Neuter.* (n.d.). Retrieved from SpayUSA: <http://www.spayusa.org/benefits.php>

[ix] *Pet Overpopulation in the United States.* (n.d.). Retrieved from ASPCA: <http://www.asPCA.org/Home/Adoption/pet-overpopulation>

[x] (Pet Overpopulation)

[xi] *Pet Care Costs.* (n.d.). Retrieved from ASPCA: <http://www.asPCA.org/Home/Adoption/pet-care-costs>

[xii] (Pet Overpopulation in the United States)

[xiii] (Benefits of Spay/Neuter)

[xiv] *Importance of Spay and Neuter.* (n.d.). Retrieved September 2012, from Humane Society Animal League for Life of Madison County Kentucky: <http://www.humanesocietyall.com/spayneuter/>

[xv] *Pet Overpopulation: The Simple Solution. Education, Legislation, Sterilization!* (n.d.). Retrieved from Stray Pet Advocacy: <http://www.straypetadvocacy.org/sterilization.html>

[xvi] (Spaying/Neutering)

[xvii] (Benefits of Spay/Neuter)

[xviii] (Pet Overpopulation)

[xix] *HSUS Pet Overpopulation Estimates.* (n.d.). Retrieved from Humane Society of the United States: http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/pet_overpopulation/facts/overpopulation_estimates.html

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