

Talking Points Against Mandatory Spay/Neuter

- Mandatory spay/neuter laws infringe on the right to privacy and on property rights.
- Animal owners, in consultation with their veterinarians, are the appropriate persons to make veterinary medical decisions about their dog or cat.
- Mandatory spay/neuter (MSN) laws do not work. Everywhere they have been tried, they have failed to reduce the number of animals euthanized in shelters. Numbers of animals killed actually increased in most localities.
- The passage of similar laws across the country has reduced licensing revenue from pet owners. Such laws have forced many pet owners “underground”, criminalizing pet ownership.
- MSN laws actually increase the number of animals euthanized in many cases. Owners fear they will be charged or cited for violations and/or they cannot afford to spay or neuter their pets so they abandon them at the shelter.
- Supporters of MSN laws claim that they will save tax payers money. This claim is false. Throughout the last 3 decades, the number of animals in shelters and euthanized statewide has declined substantially. At the same time, animal control costs have increased. There is no reason to believe that passage of a MSN ordinance would significantly impact animal control costs.
- Mandatory spay/neuter laws do not ensure that shelter numbers will decline since irresponsible people who now breed animals indiscriminately will continue to do so. In Montgomery County, Maryland, euthanasia rates declined more slowly (21.5%) than before the ordinance (34%), and in Pinellas County, Florida, shelter intake and euthanasia rates increased after a MSN ordinance took effect.
- Many dogs and cats relinquished to shelters are animals that are old, sick, or have behavior problems. These animals will continue to come in to the shelter system since the reason they are there has absolutely nothing to do with breeding or “overpopulation”.

- The animal “overpopulation problem” has been overblown. According to statistics, there are 74.8 million owned dogs in the United States (the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association). In 2009, shelter statistics are widely quoted as 6-8 million dogs and cats entering the shelter system, with 3-4 million being euthanized and the same number being adopted. Roughly, half are dogs and half are cats. Logically, this means that there are estimated to be a total of 78.8 million dogs in the nation at any given time. 4 million dogs are entering shelters; 2 million are adopted, 2 million are euthanized. While all caring individuals want to see as many animals as possible alive and safe in loving homes, the fact remains that of the estimated total number of dogs in the nation, **only .05 percent are in shelter environments at any point in time.** And of that 78.8 million total number of dogs, **only .025 percent are being euthanized at any point in time.** Clearly, education and voluntary spay/neuter programs are working to bring shelter numbers down. Mandatory spay/neuter is unnecessary.
- The top 5 reasons for an animal to come in to a shelter are: owner moving, landlord issues, cost to maintain the pet, no time for the pet, inadequate housing for the pet. #6 is “too many pets in the home” (National Council on Pet Population Study & Policy). Other reasons given are animal-to-animal behavior problems, destruction, house soiling, escaping. (Ibid.) All of these can be greatly reduced, or entirely eliminated by proper training, socialization, care and owner-animal bonding. None can be done through the passage of a mandatory spay/neuter law.
- Reducing the supply of well-bred, healthy, home-raised puppies guarantees that they will be replaced by ones in poorer condition. Driving responsible breeders out of breeding insures that the demand for puppies will be met by less-than-reputable sources, very often from other countries. For example, Mexico still has significant problems with rabies, as do many other countries that seek to move puppies and dogs in to this country.
- MSN laws are a drastic overreach of government. They punish responsible pet owners rather than targeting those who are irresponsible.

- Research studies show that the removal of hormones before sexual maturity plays a role in growth plate issues, bone, heart and kidney cancers, thyroid problems and adverse reactions to vaccinations.
- Research shows that spay or neutering causes urinary “spay incontinence” in 4-20% of female dogs. Incontinence in dogs is one of the leading reasons for owner surrenders to shelters.
- Millions of dollars in non-governmental grants can be lost to communities that pass MSN. Grants from non-governmental groups such as Maddie’s Fund (www.maddiefund.org) have policies of not funding government mandated programs.
- Responsible owners and breeders already know the benefit of spay/neuter and are voluntarily having the procedure done.
- More laws will not fix the problem of “too many animals”. Enforcement of existing laws is more helpful, such as city-wide and/or county-wide leash laws. Animal fines levied against owners should be funneled back in to low cost spay/neuter programs to help curb animal population growth. Public education campaigns should be given on an ongoing basis supported and endorsed by the community.
- Mandatory spay/neuter is a slippery political slope. It leads directly to the ultimate goal of animal rights groups: the abolition of all pet breeding and keeping. It demonizes responsible breeders while making them bear the brunt of onerous laws and a situation not of their making.
- There is no overwhelming call for mandatory spay/neuter laws from animal health professionals because many of the proposed benefits simply cannot be substantiated.
- Rabies is essentially a 100% fatal disease for humans and dogs. A mandatory spay/neuter law will discourage pet owners from seeking immunizations if they are opposed to spaying and neutering. This will ultimately lead to a decrease in vaccinations and owners seeking medical care for their pets.
- Statistics show that 87% of owned cats and 75% of owned dogs are spayed or neutered. The remainder are animals either too old or too young to be altered, breeding stock owned by people who already act responsibly and should not be penalized by a

MSN law, or those owned by irresponsible people that no law will reach.

- Alternatives to mandatory spay/neuter laws include publicly funded low cost spay/neuter programs, publicly supported dog training, low cost community educational clinics on proper pet care, creation of community projects and events such as dog parks and dog shows that spark interest in dogs and the human/animal bond. According to the Animal Population Control Study Commission, Minnesota Legislature, for every dollar invested in municipally operated spay/neuter clinics, taxpayers will save \$18.72 in future animal control costs over a 10-year period.