

Pet overpopulation continues to be a problem

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The serious problem of pet overpopulation has been a feature of this column in the past. Two recent events - meeting (by accident) with a dog breeder at a local business, and one of our members sadly stating that the pet overpopulation problem seems just as bad as 20 years ago - made me realize that this problem still needs to be addressed.

Pet overpopulation continues to be a huge problem in the United States. We claim to be a nation of animal lovers, however there are still too many unwanted animals being killed in shelters here and across the country.

Today, only one out of 10 dogs or cats born will find a permanent home. Every day, an estimated 12,000 cats and dogs are euthanized in shelters. These numbers are better than 20 years ago, but they have plateaued out, and are not decreasing like they need to.

The numbers are staggering and overwhelming. One female cat and her offspring can produce 420,000 cats in 7 years. A female dog and her offspring can produce 67,000 unwanted dogs in 6 years.

The emotional and financial cost behind these numbers is high. Euthanizing all these healthy animals takes a high emotional and physical toll on those involved. Studies have shown that those doing the euthanizing are more likely to have job stress, work-to-home conflicts, and substance abuse problems.

Financially, the estimated cost to euthanize one animal is \$100, compared to an average cost of \$40 to alter one animal. Nationally this comes to approximately \$2 billion a year to handle/house these animals, and ultimately euthanize them.

What can be done?

What can be done to help alleviate pet overpopulation? This is such an overwhelming issue, and is one that is hard to handle. However, the first two steps are easy.

First, make sure your animal companion is fixed. Not only will they be unable to breed, but will be healthier as well. It is also cheaper to license a fixed animal.

Secondly, promote neuter/spay to those animal lovers around you. Coalition for Pet Protection volunteers have taken way too many hotline calls that started with "they just got out once!" Well, that's all it takes to have an unwanted litter.

Support animal welfare groups that are working to alleviate this problem. There are several such local nonprofit groups, the Lincoln Animal Control grant program, and national groups such as Spay/USA.org that offer assistance in getting the animals

fixed. They can't do this without funds, so think of them when looking to donate. Most are all-volunteer and operate on a shoestring budget, but make a huge difference.

Education and legislation are also important. The issue of pet overpopulation needs to be in the public's eye, and we need tougher legislation. Mandatory neuter/spay laws have made a huge difference in many areas of the country.



If you are looking for an animal companion, check out the shelters and rescue groups. One will find great pets there. Doing so promotes the overpopulation problem. Also treat the adoption as a lifetime commitment to the animal. Too many unwanted animals are turned in, thus adding to the pet overpopulation problem.

The Coalition was founded in 1992. We currently assist local families in need of medical help for their cats. CPP also has an active animal food pantry featuring food and supplies for both cats and dogs. The Coalition is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. All donations are tax-deductible and are used locally. Follow us on Facebook and at www.petcoalition.org. The CPP hotline is 402-434-7922.

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