

Fact Sheet

Indiana's Companion Animals Need Your Help!

Support HB 1331

It is estimated that between 6-8 million dogs and cats enter animal shelters in the United States every year. **Of that number approximately 3-4 million (that's about 8 per minute) are euthanized due to lack of available homes.**

The number of homeless animals varies by state—in some states there are upwards of 300,000 homeless animals euthanized in animal shelters every year. These are not defective, "street" animals—these are mostly the puppies and kittens of cherished family pets and even purebreds.

Any veterinarian will tell you that the leading cause of death for our beloved companion animals is not disease or injury – it is euthanasia. Euthanasia of healthy pets is a tragedy which every pet owner can help put an end to by spaying or neutering their own pets and governments can help by funding spay and neuter programs. Spaying and neutering are the only proven ways to reduce pet overpopulation, ensuring that every pet has a family to love them.

U.S. Shelters cannot save and support these high volumes of animals in need of service. The cost of caring for these 8 million homeless animals each year places an astronomical burden on our local governments and private animal care organizations. In 2007, approximately **\$2.4 billion** was spent in the U.S. on caring for homeless animals.

Due to the lack of a central reporting system, it is difficult to estimate the number of animals relinquished to animal shelters in Indiana each year. However, preliminary results from research gathered by Indiana University **indicate that over 125,000 animals are surrendered to shelters in our state alone.** And **on average, shelters spend between \$100-\$400 per animal entering their facility.** Local governments literally spend millions of dollars a year handling the influx of unwanted animals.

Spaying and neutering lie at the foundation of any effective animal control program. Reducing pet overpopulation by spaying and neutering not only prevents many surplus animal births and deaths but also lowers the cost of animal care and control in the future and solves other problems as well. For instance, statistics show that over 70% of dog bite incidents involve intact males, and unsterilized dogs account for 95 percent of all fatal attacks. Spaying and neutering have everything to do with animal control.

The Indiana Companion Animal Spay/Neuter Fund (ICASF) would create a statewide spay/neuter fund to make low cost spay/neuter accessible for the pets of Medicaid recipients. The program would be funded by a surcharge of \$3 on rabies vaccinations, a surcharge to individuals purchasing unaltered animals at pet stores, a voluntary contribution via Indiana income tax refund and an increase in the fee that dog and cat feed distributors pay annually. Veterinarians who choose to participate in the program will be reimbursed \$50 per spay/neuter procedure & will be eligible for a state tax credit.

Research has shown that cost is the most significant barrier for pet owners to have their pets spayed or neutered. By making spay/neuter accessible and affordable, fewer animals enter shelters each year. In addition to preventing the tragic and unnecessary euthanization of tens of thousands of adoptable animals each year in Indiana, tax payers will benefit from the reduction in animal control costs.

A solution is urgently needed. In the time that it has taken to read this fact sheet, over 8 animals will have been euthanized.



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**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
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Celebrating Animals | Confronting Cruelty

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