

## **On the Positive Side: Spay, neuter bill introduced for New Mexico**

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For too many years now, New Mexico animal welfare advocacy groups, caring individuals and government agencies have struggled to provide spay and neuter assistance across our state, often through the support of corporate grants. Pet overpopulation has resulted in 60,000 dogs and cats being euthanized in New Mexico shelters each year. Lawmaker in this legislative session have an opportunity to increase the accessibility of affordable low-cost spay/neuter services throughout our state to address the issue.

New Mexico currently spends \$27 million a year to pay for animal shelters, animal control and euthanasia, according to the most recent data, and the cost is rising. Rural counties have the highest rates of euthanasia of shelter animals. The availability of low-cost spay and neuter is uneven across New Mexico. In information from 2011, almost one-third of New Mexico counties had no low-cost spay/neuter resources, while 14 other counties had only a single source for low-cost services. Absent a proactive approach of expanding services to underserved areas, New Mexico will continue to experience an exponentially worsening and costly problem. Euthanasia will never address the root of the problem, which is the number of reproductively intact animals outside shelters' doors.

State Rep. Carl Trujillo has introduced and prefiled HB 123 to create a self-perpetuating annual fund to bring much-needed low-cost spay/neuter resources to communities throughout New Mexico. This bill creates a small surcharge on pet food companies for the privilege of selling dog and cat food and treats in New Mexico. This bill is similar to those of other states being successfully implemented. There already appears to be growing legislative support, as well as a statewide grassroots effort for the bill.

The first paragraph of the HB 123 states, "An Act relating to animal neutering; imposing an additional fee on commercial feed for dogs and cats to fund a dog and cat sterilization assistance program; establishing a household income level for assistance." The entire bill can be read by going to [www.nmlegis.gov](http://www.nmlegis.gov) and following the simple instructions. There are some exceptions in the bill. The fee won't apply in cases of formula feed; prescription diet feed ordered or manufactured by a veterinarian; or to small feed manufacturers, those who make less than \$500,000 per year distribution.

This is an opportunity for each of us to get involved. You can become part of the positive action by spreading the word to friends, family, co-workers, everybody! Contact your state senators and representatives. Express your support to county commissioners, county manager, mayor, councilors. You will be part of an effort taking place all over the state.

This column has often encouraged support of the animal welfare organization of your choice, and now you can support literally all of them. Let's make this a success.

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