

On the Positive Side: Spaying vs. neutering

By Frank Bryce

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Here in Doña Ana County, we face tough economic times and hear repeatedly about budget shortages from county and city administrators affecting issues including spay and neuter efforts. Fortunately, there are local organizations and advocates who cooperate with programs to help address local animal issues. One strategy to prevent pet overpopulation and reduce the local euthanasia rate we hear about most frequently and at the forefront of these efforts is spaying and neutering.

With the nonprofit organizations often at full capacity and limited resources, the overcrowding at our shelter contributes to adverse health and welfare conditions for animals there. City and county funds have been found to improve air flow and sanitation issues of the primary shelter building while sanitation and rodent infestation issues of the infirmary building are being addressed through donations and volunteers.

These are important steps taken but could we additionally do something outside the shelter? The shelter director has continually argued the community is not doing its share to meet its pet responsibility and that is true in many ways.

There may be a positive approach addressing both the economic hard times and pet overpopulation. It requires a philosophical change and commitment for many of us to march to a different drum. The Humane Society of Southern New Mexico is developing a policy and program to only spay female cats and dogs for the foreseeable future addressing more effectively our overpopulation and economic issues.

Reasoning dictates males cannot produce offspring regardless of how many intact males may be available if there are no intact females available.

A simple explanation follows from "The Difference of Neutering Tom or Spaying Alley": If you have five intact male cats and five intact females how many litters could you have and the answer is five in one reproductive cycle. If you neuter four of the males how many litters could you have and the answer is still five. If you spay four of the females how many litters could you have and the answer is now one.

This is a simple explanation granted but it does illustrate the potential and cost effective process involved. If you look at a perfect year for reproduction by the five females you have reduced the reproduction from 150 kittens to 30 and that may be a positive step we need at this time.

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