

Benefits of spaying and neutering a pet

BY CAROL CARIDAD

President, Paws4You Rescue



As the President of Paws 4 You Rescue, I am shocked at the number of dogs that Miami-Dade Animal Services receives on a daily basis. Controlling the animal population

by spaying and neutering would alleviate some of the problem.

So why is it important to spay or neuter your pet? In a city like Miami where we have 365 days a year of sunshine and warm weather, there are no environmental factors such as cold weather or snow to inhibit breeding. The result is an overpopulation problem where thousands of pets are being euthanized every day.

If each fertile, unsterilized female cat produces three litters of six kittens each year and lives an average of 10 years, just one cat can produce 180 offspring. A female dog can produce up to two litters of six-10 puppies per year. Based on the 10-year span, one female dog can produce 200 puppies in its life.

It's impossible to find homes for all of these animals that can potentially come from one unsterilized animal. They will end up on the streets where they will continue to breed, suffer injury and eventually a painful death. If they're lucky enough to end up in a county run shelter, they will have a 32 percent chance for adoption. A lucky few will be saved, but the other 68 percent of pets entering Miami's public shelter system are euthanized for lack of space and lack of homes.

It is a sad reality that 6-8 million dogs and cats enter shelters each year and only 3-4 million leave. These alarming numbers should be reason enough for preventing more animal births.

Health benefits — Aside from the moral obligation that we have to do what's right for our furry companions, there are many positive health benefits to spaying or neutering your pet. Spaying of female dogs helps them avoid ovarian and uterine infections, and cancer in later years. It also decreases mammary tumors by almost 91 percent if the female is spayed by eight months of age. An un-spayed cat is seven times more likely to develop mammary tumors. Male dogs benefit from neutering simply because their

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drive to mate becomes virtually extinct; roaming decreases by 90 percent, resulting in fewer lost dogs, fight-related injuries and less transmission of disease. Aggressiveness also lessens after neutering along with the need to mount and territorially mark. The latest medical findings indicate that your pet will live a longer healthier life if spayed or neutered.

Spay and neuter services — If you are considering spaying or neutering your pet, sterilization services are performed by your very own veterinarians. However, if your heart goes out to the homeless population, low-cost options are available at the Humane Society of Greater Miami (www.humanesocietymiami.org) and the Humane Society of Broward County (www.showyourhumaneside.com).

Miami Dade Animals Services, our only public shelter, offered low cost sterilization services in the past, but due to budget cuts these services are no longer available. To help change this, please lobby your local commissioners and representatives to bring back this greatly needed and widely used service. Sheltering unwanted and homeless pets, capturing strays and investigating cruelty cases costs taxpayers millions each year. Help make a difference by spaying or neutering your pet. Sterilization prevents births, saves lives and in the long run helps a community save money.

Adopt, spay and neuter, and tell your friends and family to do the same. If you are interested in adopting a dog, becoming a foster home or volunteering with us, please visit us at the Colonial Palms PetSmart, 13621 S. Dixie Hwy., every Sunday (except holidays) from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. or visit our website at www.paws4you.org for more information.

PET OF THE WEEK

Howie is a very friendly, eight-year-old, tri-colored beagle who loves kids and other dogs. This laid-back guy will make the perfect pet for any size family. Call 786-242-7377 or send email to info@paws4you.org to meet him.

Carol Caridad is president of Paws 4 You Rescue. She may be contacted by calling 786-242-7377, by addressing email to carol@paws4you.org or by visiting www.paws4you.org.