

The consequences of pet overpopulation are much too tragic to be simplified.

The number of victims - unwanted homeless dogs and cats - is of such magnitude that it is time that society be made aware of the reality of this tragedy. The statistics tell the story.

Eight to ten million dogs and cats are killed in shelters across the United States every year. These staggering numbers don't include the animals that die on our roads or from unreported animal abuse. Also not included are the animals that die after being sold to research laboratories from our shelters. Of the animals killed in shelters, only a small fraction are vicious because of owner mistreatment or illegal intentions. A very small fraction are terminally ill or too sick to be treated. The majority of these dogs and cats are healthy. Many can be treated and behavior problems eliminated.

We are killing adoptable dogs and cats capable of giving and receiving love for many more years.

Why are we doing something that we know is wrong?

What are the root causes?

1. People acquire cats and dogs from sources that perpetuate overpopulation. They buy from breeders and pet stores. 5,000 puppy mills breed more than 1/2 million dogs in deplorable conditions, most of which are shipped to pet stores. By buying from these sources we perpetuate the market. 25% of the animals in shelters are purebred. When a pet is purchased, a shelter animal dies.
2. Many pet owners who fail to spay and neuter their animals. Whether by intent or neglect, these dogs and cats reproduce. For every litter born, that many will die in a shelter. Many of these people are hobby and professional breeders, others are backyard breeders wanting their children to see the miracle of birth. Perhaps these people need to visit the killing room of a shelter to watch the tragedy of death.
3. People treat pets as disposable commodities. People simply surrender or abandon their animals instead of taking responsibility for them for their lifetime. Every day people walk into shelters and surrender animals for reasons as frivolous as the animal not matching their furniture anymore or we're going on vacation and can't afford to board - we'll just get another dog when we come home. The number one excuse is moving - the owner doesn't consider the animal important enough to find animal friendly housing. More excuses include - behavior problems, not enough time, can't afford, and allergies.

In summary, failure to spay and neuter is the major cause, but how we acquire our dogs and cats and how long we keep them is also a contributing cause. For every animal killed - be it a dog, cat, pig, rabbit, or bird - there is a human outside the walls of the shelter responsible.

So if the root cause is a combination of three, what is the solution?

The reverse.

The message to society is this:

Don't Breed or Buy – Adopt * Keep Your Pets Safe at Home * Spay and Neuter

And Remember - pets are living creatures, capable of fear, love, pain, loneliness, and joy. They should never be considered disposable property, for they should be considered members of the family. Every companion animal must be loved and protected.

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