

REPORT ON LOW-COST SPAY NEUTER PROGRAMS

IN CANADA

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The Spay Neuter Resource Group, consisting of several people living around Kingston ON, has compiled information about different types of Spay/Neuter programs across Canada, to help animal rescue and humane groups share information about effective strategies. Our focus was owned and feral animals, rather than those already in shelters. We are grateful to all those who took time to respond to our questionnaire.

We have identified several issues which need to be addressed:

- **the availability and cost-effectiveness of funding to provide low-cost Spay/Neuter (SN) services**
- **widely varying regulations and requirements for vaccinations**
- **transportation for those who cannot otherwise bring their animal to a clinic**
- **Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) programs for caregivers of feral cat colonies**

A summary of the results appears below. It shows a variety of models which we hope will prove useful for all those dealing with this issue, and working to make life better for animals and those who care about them.

Any feedback and suggestions for future action would be appreciated and can be sent to margb@kingston.net.

LOW- COST SPAY NEUTER PROGRAMS

TYPES OF PROGRAMS:

- (1) SN (Spay Neuter) clinic run by an SPCA.**
- (2) SN clinic run by a municipality**
- (3) SN clinic owned and operated by veterinarians**
- (4) SNAP (Spay Neuter Assistance Program) run by volunteer groups or a foundation**
- (5) SNAP run by an SPCA using local vet clinics**
- (6) SNAP run by an SPCA using local vet clinics with financial involvement of the municipality**
- (7) SNAP run by municipality using local vet clinics**

BRITISH COLUMBIA

**BC SPCA – Animal Hospital in Vancouver (Type 1)
-- Spay Neuter Clinic in Prince George (Type 1)**

Victoria Branch of BC SPCA – SNAP for low-income cat guardians (Type 5)

Richmond Animal Protection Society (Type 5)

Atlas Animal Hospital operated by Dr. H. Bhullar (Type 3)

Maverick Cat Coalition

ALBERTA

SNAP, Calgary – a coalition of three groups operate this program: MEOW Foundation, Animal Rescue Foundation and Calgary Humane Society (Type 4)

City of Calgary Animal Services – plans for new clinic which will provide SN for animals in their charge and for low-income pet guardians (Type 2)

Edmonton – Spay Neuter Clinic which has same somewhat lower prices for all clients (Type 3)

SASKATCHEWAN

Regina Humane Society, City of Regina, Academy of Small Animal Practitioners

Saskatoon -- New Hope (homeless dogs) and SCAT (Street Cat Rescue for homeless and feral cats) (Type 4)

MANITOBA

Winnipeg Humane Society (Type 1)

William Whyte Cat Spay Service

ONTARIO

Fixed Fur Life (Belleville area) (Type 4)

City of Sudbury (Type 7)

City of Ottawa (Type 12)

Barrie SPCA and City of Barrie (Type 6)

London (Type 3)

Jazzpurr Society, Windsor (Type 4)

Gananoque (Type 5)

Kingston Humane Society (Type 5)

Toronto Animal Services – Two Spay Neuter Clinics (Type 2)

Spaycentral Toronto

QUEBEC

SPAY CANADA, Montreal (Type 4)

MARITIMES

New Brunswick

Oromocto and Area SPCA, NB (Type 5)

Charlotte County SPCA, NB (Type 5)

Fredericton SPCA, Operation CatSNIP, NB (Type 4)

Nova Scotia

Animal Rescue Coalition (ARC) NS (Type 4)

Clare Feral Friends Society, NS (Type 4)

Bide Awhile, NS (Type 4)

Cape Isle Pet Rescue, NS (Type 4)

Queen's County SPCA, NS (Type 5)

Prince Edward Island

CAT (Cat Action Team) does TNR.

Newfoundland

Newfoundland and Labrador SPCA (Type 5)

Ruff-Spots, NFL (Type 4)

Central Paws HS, Grand Falls-Windsor (Type 4)

DESCRIPTIONS OF PROGRAMS

BRITISH COLUMBIA

BCSPCA Animal Hospital in Vancouver and BCSPCA Spay Neuter Clinic in Prince George:

Eligibility: Anyone who indicates need is eligible.

Payment: At the Animal Hospital, usually, a cat neuter is \$45; cat spay \$55; dog neuter \$60; dog spay \$65. At the SN Clinic the price is generally as follows: a cat neuter \$55; a cat spay \$85; a dog neuter \$90 - \$110, a dog spay \$100-130. Tattoo for ID is free. In some circumstances volunteers pick up cats in poor downtown neighbourhoods and the SN is free.

Vaccinations: Vaccinations prior to spay/neuter are strongly recommended, but not mandatory. The cost for the feline vaccinations is under \$30.

Stats: About 3,000 animals receive SN at each facility annually.

The BC SPCA has also increased SN in smaller BC communities, including Comox, Kelowna, Kamloops, Cranbrook and Trail.

BCSPCA Victoria Branch, “Ginger” Fund –Low-Income SN Assistance for Cats

Eligibility: Any cat guardian on income assistance, EI, disability pension, old age pension, low-income or is a student may receive a SN certificate which may be taken to any participating veterinary clinic for a discounted SN.. Generally if the gross household income is less than \$35,000 per year, the pet guardian is eligible to take part in the program.

Payment: The cat guardian pays \$30 for the cat neuter and \$50 for the cat spay, both of which include tattooing.

Vaccinations: The cat guardians must get these done at a private vet clinic.

This project was made possible through a generous legacy and is named after one of the donor’s beloved cats. This new fund will help with the SN of 1,500 cats annually.

Richmond Animal Protection Society

Eligibility: Cat guardians who state they cannot afford the regular price for SN

Payment: Flexible, from no cost to \$20+ at the clinics of participating veterinarians, transportation is available when needed. Some grants from IFAW and the Vancouver Foundation.

RAPS also does TNR and manages a dozen feral colonies.

Bylaws: City of Richmond has a spay/neuter bylaw which requires all cat guardians to SN their cats by age 6 months. Unfixed cats are not allowed off a guardian’s property.

Atlas Animal Clinic owned by Dr. B. Bhullar

Eligibility and Payment: All pet guardians are eligible and the price is as follows: cat neuter \$35+; cat spay \$45+, dog neuter (up to 60 lb.) \$55; dog spay (up to 60 lb.) \$65.

NOTE: Although some municipalities in British Columbia have bylaws aimed at controlling pet overpopulation, most of the respondents felt that these bylaws had little effect, primarily because of enforcement problems.

Maverick Cat Coalition

Eligibility: People who feed and care for stray and feral domestic cats in the Lower Mainland of BC. Generally the group does not deal with owned pets. Individuals who require their help are usually low-income, disabled, senior or retired.

Payment: The group covers the payment at a low-cost vet clinic.

TNR is their main program.

ALBERTA

SNAP –This is a program of the MEOW Foundation, Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF) and the Calgary Humane Society

Eligibility: Low-income pet guardians in Calgary

Payment: Pet guardians pay what they can afford (ranging from \$0 to \$150). About ¼ of the veterinary clinics in Calgary are participating. Occasionally transportation is arranged.

Vaccinations: None are required prior to surgery.

Stats: 1,000 SNs are anticipated in 2006/2007.

Special Note: Before the program was established, there was an analysis of which areas of the City needed most help.

City of Calgary Animal Services

There are plans to build a new clinic that will provide services for pound animals and for pets of low-income Calgarians. The City of Calgary plans to use money from their new cat licensing program as a source of financing. There is now a yearly license fee of \$30 for an unaltered cat, \$10 for a spayed or neutered cat aged 3 months or older, and \$15 for an unaltered kitten 3–6 months.

Edmonton Veterinary Clinic

Eligibility: Open

Payment: Cat neuter \$50; Cat spay \$95; Small dog neuter \$125; Small dog spay \$155, somewhat lower than the usual fees.

Vaccinations: The first set of vaccinations plus booster are required prior to the surgery.

SASKATCHEWAN

Regina Humane Society

Eligibility: All dogs under 7 months and all cats are accepted. No income requirement.

Payment: The pet guardian pays 60% of the cost of the SN and the City and veterinarians pay 40%. All veterinarians in the City of Regina belong to the Academy of Small Animal Practitioners which supports the SN program. After 1998, the fee paid by the pet guardian increased, and the Regina Humane Society noted an increase in the incoming animals at their shelter and an increase in euthanasia.

Changes are planned for this SN program so that funding is targeted more directly at low-income pet guardians. There is a draft proposal to include all of the shelter's adopted animals and offer low-income pet guardians fully funded SN. An analysis has shown that 67% of Regina's stray animals come from a small low-income area of the city.

Vaccinations: Not included in the SN price.

Stats: 4000 SN in 2005

Bylaws: Since 1999 there has been a cat bylaw which requires all unsterilized cats to have a license. The fine and license are waived if the cat guardian agrees to the SN of the cat (the less expensive option).

Saskatoon –New Hope (for homeless dogs)

Eligibility: Dogs of people on social assistance or income less than \$20,000.

Payment: No fee-\$50 depending on circumstances

Stats: 10 to 20 per year

Saskatoon – SCAT (for homeless and feral cats)

Eligibility: Cats of people with income less than \$20,000

Payment: \$0 for SN, some veterinarians provide a discount

Vaccinations: Cat guardian pays vet if possible, otherwise \$20

Stats: SN of 30-60 cats per year

Bylaws: In Saskatoon there is a licence fee of \$15 for SN pets, \$30 for intact pets

MANITOBA

Winnipeg Humane Society

Eligibility: Anyone within the City of Winnipeg qualifies for assistance, low-income or not, but media releases present the program as assistance for those who need it. Pet guardians outside the City are accepted, but must be on low-income and pay a slightly higher price. An annual income of \$20,000 or less is considered low-income.

Payment: In the 20-20-20 PROGRAM for cats, the City of Winnipeg pays \$20; the owner pays \$20; and the Winnipeg Humane Society pays \$20. For those outside the City, the cost is \$32.50 for a neuter and \$37.50 for a spay. Cat owners who are low-income qualify for \$5 vaccinations, while others must take their pet to their own veterinarian for the vaccinations. Every Tuesday, transportation is arranged for those who could not get their pet to the clinic. The price for neutering a dog is \$47.50 for people both in the City and outside City limits. A tattoo is included in all spays and neuters. No-cost or low-cost SN is given to caregivers of feral cat colonies.

The SN is done at the clinic of the Winnipeg Humane Society. A new full-service veterinary clinic will be built by the Winnipeg Humane Society next year. The WHS have their own veterinarians.

The Winnipeg Humane Society sends their own veterinary staff to do SN in northern communities. The community must provide a building for the surgeries – a gym or public hall.

Vaccinations: One set of vaccinations is required.

Bylaws: The City of Winnipeg recently passed a bylaw which requires all cats over six months of age to be spayed or neutered.

William Whyte Cat Spay Service

In this program volunteers pick up cats from inner-city low-income families, transport them to the Winnipeg Humane Society's clinic or a local veterinarian, and then return them to the owners. They also distribute pet health care information.

Eligibility: Any cats from guardians who are low-income and have no access to a vehicle

Payment: Approximately \$20 (Winnipeg Humane Society does the SN for free if people can't pay.)

Stats: Approximately 300 a year

Bylaws: In Winnipeg there is mandatory SN for cats over 6 months.

ONTARIO

NOTE: The OSPCA plans to implement SN programs at their branches in the future.

Fixed Fur Life, Belleville

Eligibility: People on low-income who have provided proof of income.

Payment: On average, most people are able to pay \$80 for a spay and \$50 for a neuter. The vets provide a 20% reduction in price.

Stats: Formed in 2004, Fixed Fur Life has arranged the SN of 1,300 cats and dogs, mostly cats.

This group also has a TNR program.

City of Sudbury

Eligibility: All pet guardians qualify but the media releases focus on the fact that this assistance is for those who need it.

Payment: The City of Sudbury allocates \$50,000 a year for SN vouchers for dogs and cats. At the end of the year when people renew their dog and cat licenses, they can receive an SN voucher, which must be used within two months. This money comes from the license/registration fees for dogs and cats.

Spay vouchers are \$115 for dogs and cats and neuter vouchers are \$65 for dogs and cats. All veterinarians in Sudbury participate in the program and submit an invoice to the City of Sudbury for the number of SN vouchers.

Vaccinations: Some vet clinics require two sets of vaccinations; others require no vaccinations.

City of Ottawa – Municipal Spay/Neuter Clinic

Eligibility: Both dogs and cats of all pet guardians

Payment: Cat neuter \$70; cat spay \$105; dog neuter \$151+; dog spay \$192+. The veterinarian has a contract with the City, and the other staff at the clinic are City employees.

Vaccinations: The clinic did include the vaccinations, but were required to stop.

Stats: In 2005, 2,579 animals were spayed/neutered, 38% male cats, 35% female cats, 15% male dogs, 12% female dogs.

Bylaws: If a cat or dog is microchipped, the license is free for the animal's lifetime. If the animal is SN, the license is \$12.

Barrie SPCA

The program for 2007 will begin again this spring.

Eligibility: Low-income pet guardians who fill out an application, including picture ID and proof of income.

Payment: When the applicants have been approved, they receive a voucher and can make an appointment at one of the local vet clinics. Once the surgery is completed, the vet clinic returns the signed voucher to the Barrie branch of the OSPCA, and the Barrie branch pays the vet clinic.

Vaccinations: Proof of vaccinations, including rabies, is required before the applicant is approved.

London Spay Neuter Clinic

Eligibility: All pet guardians

Payment: Prices slightly lower than those at regular veterinary clinic.

Jazzpurr Society, Windsor

This program has been temporarily suspended because of funding.

Gananoque Humane Society

This program has been suspended.

Kingston Humane Society

Eligibility: Pet guardians on disability or low-income

Payment: The pet guardian pays \$30

Vaccinations: Two sets of vaccinations required

Stats: A new program beginning in 2007, plan for 15 pets SN per month

Toronto Animal Services – Two Spay Neuter Clinics

Eligibility: All dog and cat guardians

Payment: Cat neuter \$50; cat spay \$70; dog neuter \$80; dog spay \$100 (under one year); dog spay (over a year) \$130. License \$15 must be purchased.

Vaccinations: Two boosters and rabies

Spaycentral Toronto

This new organization plans to build Toronto's first high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter clinic, on the model of the clinics of the Humane Alliance in the USA. Petsmart Charities has made a generous marching pledge toward the set-up costs. Spay Central is building a website which will be single source for spay/neuter information in Canada. They plan to list information on all groups involved in SN in Canada at www.spaycentral.com.

QUEBEC

SPAY CANADA, Montreal

Eligibility: primarily cats of low-income guardians. There must be proof that the one wage earner in the home makes \$14,000 or less. (SPAY CANADA also assists six animal shelters in the Montreal region)

Payment: Clients contact SPAY CANADA in response to advertisements and then SPAY CANADA mails them a referral certificate for a nearby participating clinic. The client pays the clinic directly. SPAY CANADA pays for 75% of the SN and first set of vaccinations.

The cost varies with the vet clinic chosen. At Vanier College, where veterinary training is given, the cost of a cat neuter is \$30; a cat spay is \$60. Vaccinations are \$25. Strays only are given SN at Vanier College. At a typical vet clinic the cost of SN for a cat neuter is \$97, and a cat spay is \$118.

Vaccinations: Depend on policies of vet clinic chosen

Stats: 16,000 animals have received SN in the eight years of SPAY CANADA's work

MARITIMES

New Brunswick

Oromocto and Area SPCA

Eligibility: Low-income cat guardians

Payment: \$40 for spay or neuter, which is done at the local veterinary clinic

Stats: Approximately 70 cats per year

Bylaw: Differential licensing for altered and unaltered dogs

Charlotte County SPCA, St. Stephen

Eligibility: Dogs or cats of people who verify verbally that they are in financial need.

Payment: Pet guardians pay half of the cost of the SN directly to the vet at the time of surgery. The vet bills the SPCA for the other half. The pet guardian must pay the vet the following: cat neuter \$32; cat spay \$40; dog neuter/spays \$43-63.

Vaccinations: Depends on vet clinic (one set of vaccinations or none until surgery)

Fredericton SPCA -- Operation CatSNIP

Eligibility: Cats of low-income guardians, with annual income less than \$25,000.

Payment: \$65

Stats: 75 cats per year

NOTE: The organizers of CATSNIP believe their program is a “ visible effort” and gives them “a platform from which to make a statement about the local situation.”

NOVA SCOTIA

Animal Rescue Coalition, Tantallon

Eligibility: Individual assessments

Payment: The cost depends on the veterinarian and other factors. There are 22 participating veterinarians who offer services at discounted rates. Transportation is occasionally arranged.

Stats: Over 600 animals in 2006

Clare Feral Friends Society

Eligibility: Low-income pet guardians

Payment: Pet guardians pay at least half of the cost of the SN. Occasionally transportation is arranged.

Vaccinations: Pet guardians must pay this.

Stats: Approximately 100 a year (This includes TNR of feral cats.)

Bide Awhile

Eligibility: Low-income pet guardians

Stats: SN of 210 pets

Cape Isle Pet Rescue, Isle Madame

Eligibility: Flexible, based on income

Payment: \$40 for SN, transportation if necessary

Stats: In 2006, SN of 65 cats and 18 dogs

Queen’s County SPCA, Liverpool

Eligibility: Dogs and cats of low-income families

Payment: Approximately \$135, transportation if necessary

Vaccinations: Local vets give the first vaccination free along with a free examination

Stats: SN of 135-140 pets

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Cat Action Team (CAT)

Eligibility: No owned pets, SN and treatment of for feral/outside/barn cats

Payment: Some clinics offer some discount

Stats: About 2500 cats in 6 years.

NEWFOUNDLAND

Newfoundland and Labrador SPCA

Eligibility: Pets of low-income families, usually those on social assistance

Payment: Pet guardian pays 75% of the total cost and the SPCA pays 25%. Veterinarians do not give a discounted rate.

Stats. SN of 100-200 pets each year

Ruff-Spots Animal Welfare Foundation

Eligibility: Pets in shelters, plans for pets of low-income guardians

Payment: Ruff-Spots provide grants to shelters/ rescue groups. They fund \$200 for a dog and \$150 for the SN of a cat.

Stats: They have provided 14 animal shelters or rescue groups with the funding to carry out SN of 123 pets.

Central Paws HS, Grand Falls-Windsor

Eligibility: Low-income pet guardians on an individual basis

Payment: 10% up front, guardians agree to repay balance but rarely do so. The single vet clinic in central Newfoundland discounts fostered pets for SN, but not those of low-income guardians.

Vaccinations: Included for dogs

There is a bylaw that states that all cats and dogs must be SN, then get a lifetime licence. Unlicensed kittens and puppies can be seized if a breeding fee is not paid.

USA

Some areas of the USA have made remarkable progress in reducing pet over-population primarily through spay/neuter programs. The American SPCA, SPAY USA and Maddie's Fund are among the best sources of information.

The following are a few examples of where there was concentrated, targeted, spay/neuter outreach and a corresponding drop in euthanasia and/or intake of animals to shelters:

- In the 12 years that Humane Alliance has been in business and has done over 157,000 surgeries in their area and surrounding counties, the intake rate in their county has dropped from over 17,000 to under 5,000. The local shelter attributes this to the Humane Alliance clinic and spay/neuter ordinance that went into effect a few years ago mandating spay/neuter for all animals in the county. For more info, you can contact Humane Alliance at www.humanealliance.org.
- New Hampshire has a statewide spay/neuter program that has resulted in a 70% euthanasia reduction in 7 years. In the six years since the program's inception, the state's eight largest shelters admitted 30,985 fewer dogs and cats than in the six years preceding the program. The cumulative costs and expenses of the New Hampshire program and the effects on animal control costs are contained in Geoff Handy's book, "Animal Control Management: A Guide for Local Governments." This book may be ordered from the ASPCA.
- In three years First Coast No More Homeless Pets in Jacksonville, Florida, has seen their euthanasia rates drop by 37% by offering a spay/neuter program targeted to low-income residents. The City of Jacksonville has committed \$250,000 a year to fund the program. Prior to the program, annual intake increases of 15-29% at the local shelters were normal. In 2004, the first time in their history, there was a decrease in shelter intake in their county by 8.3%.

- **No More Homeless Pets in Utah and West Valley Feral Cat Partnership is an innovative partnership that saw a 40% decrease in cat intake into the shelter after a 6 month TNR program. This shelter staff was aware that every year the same citizens came in to borrow traps for feral cats and then brought the cats to the shelter. Trapping and killing the cats didn't work; TNR did. In the next year of the program, intake at the shelter went down 58% and euthanasia was down 34%.**
- **The Department of Agriculture in Connecticut has agreed to allot \$80,000 for the sterilization of feral cats and the pets of low-income guardians.**

(www.imaginehumane.org) is an ASPCA website which has more information about effective spay/neuter programs.