

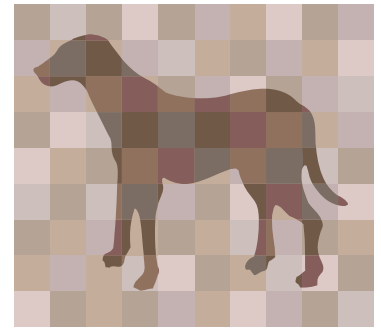
Just One Litter

Jack and Susie bought a male Akita puppy from a large pet-store chain. Of course, he came complete with AKC papers registering him as a purebred. They name him Bear, and as he grows and matures sexually, Susie can barely handle his 100-plus pounds. He is erratic, seems preoccupied, and won't listen to her when they're outside. She has lost control of him six times already, and he ran loose for several hours each time before coming home.

Jack takes Bear to a dog trainer, who advises him to neuter the dog. Neutering would make Bear manageable, reduce his inclination to run off, and help prevent him from becoming aggressive.

But Jack wants to use Bear as a stud dog. He paid \$500 for Bear, not to mention the trips to the vet for shots, checkups, and even vitamins. Surely the puppies should bring in a lot of money! Somehow, though, he never arranges to stand Bear as a stud; meantime, the dog is getting more and more difficult to handle.

One day, Susie is walking Bear in a park when they encounter a large male shepherd. Bear lunges, breaking his lead, and attacks the other dog. Susie tries to separate the dogs and is bitten by Bear. The police finally stop the fight. Each dog has cuts and bite wounds but is otherwise okay.



Jack decides to have Bear neutered. He is astonished at how much better behaved Bear becomes and how much happier the dog is. Unfortunately, Bear manages to father six litters of puppies before his surgery.

The female dogs Bear impregnated have 34 puppies among them. Some of these puppies inherit their father's aggressiveness and pose problems to people in the neighborhood. One man, tired of the dogs coming into his yard, manages to shoot one of them. Two more die when they eat rat poison. Four are killed by cars. Animal control officers capture seven more of these nuisance animals and must euthanize them because they are ill or unadoptable. One of the dog owners recognizes the size and strength of the puppies and sells his four to a dogfighter. One pet owner takes his dog's four puppies to the animal shelter and then has his dog spayed. Of the 34 puppies Bear fathers, 22 father or give birth to 156 more puppies.

Pet overpopulation may seem abstract to the average person who just has one litter on his hands. One—or even a handful—of animals from one person does not seem like an insurmountable problem. With a human population already saturated with pets and 10-20 people bringing litters into each animal shelter daily, the picture becomes clearer. The sad fact is that every litter, planned or accidental, adds to pet overpopulation. The cycle must stop before it starts—before that one litter.

This is an updated version of a 1990 article written by Katie Rindy and Rhonda Lucas Donald for The Humane Society of the United States.