



# Solutions

Helping Animals and the People Who Love Them

Issue 27

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## Gulf Coast Pet Research Project

*Why were so many pets in the Gulf Area not spayed or neutered?*

Think back for a moment to September 2005. It doesn't take long to remember the horror of Hurricane Katrina, when both people and pets were stranded and desperate. All of the major national animal welfare organizations rushed to the gulf coast to help, including Best Friends Animal Society, ASPCA, and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).



FEMA photo/ MarkWolfe

After the immediate crisis finally passed, some of the animal welfare folks were left scratching their heads and trying to answer a burning question: Why were so many pets in the gulf area not spayed or neutered? A joint research project between HSUS and Maddie's Fund has begun to answer that question and has given insight into the ways that pet owners in the south view their animals.

### **Crunching the Numbers**

The human demographics of

Louisiana and Mississippi set the stage. These two states are the poorest in the U.S. and rank near the bottom in college-educated adults.

Researchers found that people in the gulf were *more* likely to own dogs than the national average and *less* likely to own cats. Sterilization rates were decidedly lower in the gulf. Nationally, about 30% of owners report that their dogs are not sterilized, compared to 52% of dog owners

in the gulf coast area. The national rate for unaltered cats is approximately 15%. For cats in the gulf area, the rate is 23%. Although cats are less likely to be kept as pets than dogs in the gulf, they are more likely to be spayed or neutered.

### **Gulf Attitudes**

Attitudes about spaying or neutering cats differed somewhat from such attitudes about dogs.

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*SNAP's mission is to eliminate the need for euthanasia in our community's shelters, to reduce the number of homeless animals, and to educate the public about the importance of spay/neuter.*

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***SNAP is a Missouri 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.***

# 10 Ways to Keep Your Vet Happy

by Rhonda Lewsader

A few months ago, I discovered the wonderful world of veterinarian blogs. These blogs offer an inside look at how some veterinarians view their interaction with clients. From my readings, I've compiled ten ways to be a better client.

- 1** Be polite to everyone in the office. Let the focus be on your pet's health, not the ruckus you caused in the lobby.
- 2** Follow instructions carefully. Giving medication improperly can cause injury or death. Check the label each time you give a medication to make sure you're giving it correctly.
- 3** Be honest. Give your vet all the facts even when your pet's behavior is embarrassing, or you made a mistake in your caretaking so your vet can accurately assess the situation.
- 4** Ask good questions. If there are ongoing issues, think through the questions you would like answered before your appointment.
- 5** Be patient. Veterinarians may have emergencies that put them behind schedule.
- 6** Be up front. If you can't or won't follow your vet's instructions, she needs to know so she can consider a different plan of treatment. If cost is an issue, she needs to know so she can offer another option.

**7** Be observant. Your vet will usually have a short amount of time to observe your pet and determine a course of action. Your observations will help or hinder. Try to be specific — "Muffy started limping on her right front foot last Tuesday."

**8** Be concise. As a client, it is hard not to overwhelm your vet with details. Lacking their training, we don't always know what information will help, so it is tempting to bring up everything. Try to focus on the most relevant. If the veterinarian needs more information, she will ask.

**9** Keep it simple. If your pet has multiple issues, consider making a separate appointment specifically to discuss the minor issues. Or you can ask for a longer appointment, understanding this may involve a higher fee.

**10** Be a work in progress. Do your best to become a good client. Yes, you're paying for the vet's services. But forging a good relationship with your vet can only benefit your pet. My vet has made the life of a dog I cherish deeply more comfortable. That makes her pretty wonderful, in my opinion. Trying to be a good client is the best way I can think of to express my appreciation for her time and talent.

## ***Honorary Lifetime Members***

Phyllis Bixler  
Margaret Harrison  
Madeleine Kernan  
Phyllis Kiefer  
Robert Morton

## ***New members***

### *Senior/Student*

Penny Larsson

### *Individual*

Allison Ingle  
Rhonda Lewsader  
Dana Stinson

### *Life*

Dawn Mihlfeld



## ***In memoriam***

Tookie Heer  
Neil Griot's dog  
Paula Roach's dog Buddy  
Carl & Kathy Price's pet Buddy

## ***In honor of***

Susan Scobey



FEMA photo/ Win Henderson

*(Continued from page 1)*

Dog owners had clear ideas about why they didn't alter their animals, such as wanting to breed their dogs or keep options open. For cats, owners' ideas were less clear. Most simply had not gotten their cats fixed but did not know why!

Female dogs were more likely to be spayed than male dogs were to be neutered, but no difference was found between male and female cats. Not surprisingly, mixed-breed dogs were more likely to be sterilized than purebreds. The influence of economic status was predictable: those pet owners with the lowest incomes and lowest education levels were least likely to have their pets spayed or neutered.

## ***Gulf tidbits***

- ❖ Rates of spay/neuter were higher in Louisiana than Mississippi.
- ❖ The more pets found in a household, the greater the likelihood that at least one was not spayed or neutered.
- ❖ For those whose pets had given birth, cat owners were likely to say the births were accidents, while dog owners were more likely to have bred their dogs intentionally.
- ❖ Owners who obtained their pets from shelters were more likely to have them sterilized.



# You Are Invited!

## SNAP Annual Meeting

**Date:** May 4  
**Time:** 6:30 p.m.  
**Address:** 3379 S. Woodstock, Springfield, Mo  
(Home of Steve and Becky Seigel)  
**Phone:** 496-3494

Please bring your favorite snack. Beverages, ice, cups, plates, etc. will be provided.

Weather permitting, bring a lawn chair, and we'll enjoy a beautiful May evening. (If not outside, we'll still enjoy a beautiful May evening inside.)

Directions: East of Highway 65 on Battlefield one block to Woodstock. Turn right (street behind Justice Jewelers) and follow to 3379. Our house is on your right)

## Meeting Dates

### *Board of Directors Meetings*

6:30 pm

March 30 (Room A)

May 18 (Room B)

### *Volunteer Meetings*

2:00 pm

June 13 (Room A)

All meetings are held at the Library Center, 4653 S. Campbell, unless otherwise noted.



## Dog Biscuit Blitz

The March 2nd and 9th issues of *People Magazine* have a coupon for a free box of Milk-Bone Dog Biscuits. The coupon in the March 2nd issue is on page 15. The coupon is good through April 2nd. Let's clip these coupons and redeem them. Bring the boxes to the annual meeting.

We'll donate all collected to the C.A.R.E. No Kill Animal Shelter in Springfield.

Even if you don't subscribe to *People*, you can always find an outdated copy at offices, businesses, or friends' houses...so let's help

*People help people help dogs!*



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# Is Cocoa Bean Mulch Dangerous for Dogs?

From time to time e-mails circulate describing the dangers of cocoa mulch to dogs. If you received one, you may have wondered if cocoa mulch is dangerous or if the author is exaggerating. The truth lies somewhere in the middle.



The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals devotes a page of its website to cocoa bean mulch. According

to ASPCA, the mulch sold for landscaping consists of cocoa bean shells. Its pleasant smell may tempt a dog to eat it. Like cocoa beans, the mulch contains theobromine and can therefore cause methylxanthine toxicosis. This disorder may cause vomiting, tachycardia, seizures, muscle tremors, and death. Small amounts of

methylxanthine may cause gastrointestinal upset. ASPCA recommends not using cocoa bean mulch if your dog has "indiscriminate eating habits".

ASPCA notes that a retrospective search of its records revealed 16 reports of cocoa mulch poisoning between January 2002 and April 2003. A JAVMA article describes one dog's death attributed to poisoning by cocoa mulch. The dog had severe convulsions and died 17 hours after ingesting the mulch. *J Am Vet Med Assoc.* 1984 Oct 15;185(8):902.

While the level of danger described in the e-mails about cocoa bean mulch are exaggerated, there is truth in the assertion that cocoa bean shells can be hazardous to dogs. The bottom line is that cocoa bean mulch poisoning is not all that common, but as with any cocoa product, dog owners should use it with caution.

Reference: Hansen, S. et al. Cocoa Bean Mulch As a Cause of Methylxanthine Toxicosis In Dogs. [Online] Available [http://www2.aspc.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pro\\_apcc\\_publicationscocoa](http://www2.aspc.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pro_apcc_publicationscocoa), February 28, 2009.

## Special Thanks

### ***Thanks for the Pocket Change!***

New members of our "Pocket Change for Pets" program:

#### **Breadsmith**

3305 S. Campbell

#### **Mama Jean's Natural Market**

1727 S. Campbell

3028 S. Fremont

#### **Willard Veterinary Hospital**

304 Proctor Rd., Willard

The spare change collected in the donation canisters at these and other locations adds up to a significant contribution to SNAP's fund for spay and neuter surgeries. Please support the businesses that support us!



**YES!**

I would like to become a member of SNAP to help reduce the number of unwanted animals born in Southwest Missouri. I understand that by becoming a member, I will receive a quarterly newsletter, acknowledgement on the SNAP website, and an invitation to SNAP's annual meeting. (Membership is renewable annually and is tax deductible. Payment may be made by check or money order.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\$15 Student/Senior (60 & over)

\$125 Business

\$25 Individual

\$500 Lifetime

\$40 Family

**OR...**

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to help! Please send information about becoming a SNAP volunteer.

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to support SNAP's work with the enclosed tax-deductible donation.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please make a donation in memory of \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Please send me information on estate planning .

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to "Sponsor-a-Spay." I am enclosing \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to sponsor:

\_\_\_\_\_ A specific pet (indicate pet's name) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ The pet at the top of SNAP's waiting list

MAIL TO: SNAP · P.O. Box 14354 · Springfield, MO 65814 · (417)823-7627

[www.snap123.org](http://www.snap123.org)

***Solutions!***

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