



# Solutions

*Helping Animals and the People Who Love Them*

Issue 25

September 2008

*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 gets a new grant for 65803 area**

Last month Spay Neuter Clinic of the Ozarks (SNCO) and the Hazel Humphrey Foundation awarded SNAP a grant of \$10,000 to assist low-income pet owners in the 65803 zip code area.

We are very excited about this opportunity and are gearing up to issue as many certificates as we can in this high-need area of Springfield. We hope to work closely with Springfield-Greene County Animal Control to identify problem neighborhoods so that we may specifically target those. Outreach will be

the key to making sure that those who most need our services are aware of the grant. Our sincere thanks go out to SNCO and the Hazel Humphrey Foundation.



## **What's inside**

- **Economy's effect on pets**
- **Cat reproduction number—fact or myth?**



### ***Demographic profile of 65803***

- **Median age: 35.3**
- **Percent Caucasian: 93.3%**
- **Percent population 25 years and over with a Bachelor's degree or higher: 14.0%**
- **Median household income: \$28,968**
- **Individuals below poverty level: \$15.6%**
- **Median home value: \$68,500**

Source: U.S. Census, 2000.

## Letter from SNAP client

SNAP,

*I just wanted to thank you for your assistance in getting our cat Kimmi spayed. She came to us as a stray and every time she wandered out, we would worry. Your program is wonderful. I don't know how you do it. Thank you so much.*



Natalie

## In Memoriam

*Siara, Sly and Tazzy Bare  
George Mix  
Kim Lilley  
Mickey*



## It's the economy, Rover

There are tough economic times all around us these days with high gas prices, a slumping housing market, and ever-increasing food prices. Just as people have felt the pinch, so have our pets. Recent reporting by NBC, USA Today and NPR paints a bleak picture for pets, particularly those caught up in foreclosures.

Shelters are reporting an increasing number of dogs and cats being relinquished for "moving" reasons. And those may be the lucky ones. The unlucky ones are those animals whose owners move and leave them in the house or chained to a tree outside. How these "owners" can act so irresponsibly and inhumanely is beyond explanation, but this is a surprisingly common occurrence.

The economy is also affecting the ability to adopt new pets as families must often make choices between food, gas, and that new kitten they promised the kids.

The Humane Society of the United States has created a seed-money fund to help shelters and rescues deal with the (hopefully) temporary surge in homeless pets. Shelters can offer monetary assistance to owners who are in financial crisis to prevent them from giving up their pets to shelters.



Not surprisingly, the poor economy has taken a toll on SNAP as well. Not only are we getting more calls to the SNAP line and more requests for help, we're seeing a decline in volunteers as people turn inward to deal with their own financial challenges. **We have a truly urgent need for volunteers at this time.** If you can help, please contact us at [spayneuter123@gmail.com](mailto:spayneuter123@gmail.com).

# What about those 420,000 cats?

We've all heard this statistic at one time or another: "A single female cat and her offspring can theoretically produce 420,000 cats in just seven years."

But is true? Carl Bialik from Wall Street Journal Online set out to find the answer. The first thing he discovered was how widely this statistic is repeated in the media and on websites. (On the day this article was written—August 13, 2008—a simple Google Internet search of the terms "cat" and "420,000" came up with 134,000 hits!

After more digging, Mr. Bialik found that no one wanted to claim ownership of this statistic. The number is often attributed to the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), but the group is not the source of the figure. The statistic used to be listed on the HSUS website but has been removed.

This is one number that certainly seems to have nine lives! Though no one Mr. Bialik spoke to could say for sure where it comes from, and no one defended it, the myth of the prolific cat has lived on as an advocacy tool for spaying cats for at least 20 years.

The number appears to be derived from assuming that each female cat survives into adulthood, and along the way begins reproducing herself at around six months, then continues creating litters every half year. That means 14 cycles of exponential growth over seven years. But something just doesn't ring true. The statistic led a professor of veterinary medicine at the University of Tennessee to tell Mr. Bialik, "Common sense would tell you, if [the stat] were true, we'd be up to our ears in cats."

While this rate of reproduction is theoretically possible, it's highly improbable because the number does not factor in kitten mortality, which can be quite

high, especially among feral kittens. Taking mortality into account, Mr. Bialik found two more realistic figures, but there was quite a discrepancy between the two. One formula assumed one litter per year and determined that a single cat would produce approximately 100 cats in seven years. Another formula assumed two litters per year and determined that 5,000 cats would be produced. If you were ever looking for an example of how exponential growth works, this is it. Doubling the number of litters born per year did not double the total number of kittens born but increased them by a factor of 50!

The earliest reference Mr. Bialik found to the cat-reproduction figure was a 1988 article in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution (citing the HSUS). If we took a mythical cat beginning in that year, and let her and her offspring reproduce at the theoretical rate over the years since, we'd have a cat population of nearly 50 *trillion*. By comparison, there are about 82 million household cats in the U.S. according to the most recent survey of pet-owning households by the American Veterinary Medical Association. The HSUS estimates an additional 70 million feral cats. Even adding those two figures together, there's quite a difference between

152 *million* and 50 *trillion*, sort of like the difference in height between a matchbox and a skyscraper.

An ASPCA official told Mr. Bialik that the number could make the challenge of fighting pet overpopulation seem overly daunting, even as there are indicators of success. Though the euthanasia rate has dropped dramatically since the 1970s, many people claim that pet overpopulation is getting worse. A more realistic number would be useful for the animal welfare organizations addressing the problem of pet overpopulation, but most would now agree that the 420,000 myth is just that.



## Personalized stamps: Get yours now!

SNAP offers personalized pet stamps that not only are a fundraiser, but enable your very own pet to spread the word about the importance of spaying and neutering cats and dogs! These stamps are perfect for your holiday cards or as a gift.

To order, simply send an email with a jpg photo of your pet to [snap123stamps@gmail.com](mailto:snap123stamps@gmail.com). Further information is available at [www.snap123stamps.blogspot.com](http://www.snap123stamps.blogspot.com).



### SNAP's "Your Pet" Stamp Package

\*Full sheet of 42 cent stamps displaying your pet — 20 stamps  
(delivered via paper mail)

\*Frameable jpg (photo) version of your pet stamp (delivered via email)

\*Price: \$30 (includes processing and delivery)

\*Tax deductible donation amount is \$12

Don't forget to email a jpg photo of your pet to [snap123stamps@gmail.com](mailto:snap123stamps@gmail.com).

## Pet health alert: Second-hand smoke

Did you know that second-hand smoke is just as bad for pets as it is for you? The American Journal of Epidemiology determined cigarette smoke to be the leading cause of lymphoma in half the cases found in cats. Smoking in the home triples a cat's chance of catching the disease after five years of exposure to second-hand smoke.

Cats are susceptible because of their grooming behavior, but dogs aren't immune. A study at Colorado State University found that dogs from smoking homes had an increased incidence of nasal cancer. Life expectancy after diagnosis is about one year.

If you still smoke, now you have more reasons than ever to quit!

## New member welcome

### Business

Susan Dubow

### Individual

Dana Stinson

### Lifetime

Sandy Jensen  
Marilyn Johnson  
Dawn Mihlfeld  
Debby Williams

### Student/Senior

Viktor Markus

## Special Thanks

We would like to thank the folks at **Corporate Business Systems** for their generous offer to print the newsletter in full color! Commitment to the community and their customers is evident in the core beliefs found in their vision statement. Their gift allows SNAP to save on printing costs, and focus more resources on our vision of eliminating pet overpopulation.



# Blogosphere: Chatter about spay/neuter

Spay/neuter is a surprisingly popular topic on blogs. A Google blog search for "dog OR cat" plus spay & neuter yields over 13,000 results for 2008 alone. Blogs are usually written by ordinary people -- so reviewing recent posts gives fascinating insight into what is going on around the country regarding spaying and neutering. Here's a sampling...

## **Adopt A Dallas Pet: Every three minutes a dog or cat is killed in a Dallas shelter**

On April 28th the Quality of Life Committee voted unanimously in favor of sending the new Dallas animal related ordinances to the full City Council in June. One of the proposals causing the most controversy centers around mandatory spay/neuter legislation. Even though this plan contains numerous exemptions, it has become the center of a very vigorous debate. Simply stated, the proposal will require owners to spay or neuter their pets (dogs, cats) unless they pay a yearly breeder fee. (5/15/08)

## **Green Girl in WI: The one where I try to act responsibly**

Damn the farmer up the road with all his farm cats. Get a few of them fixed, already. I plotted to catnap a few and take them to be spayed and neutered on my own dime. Poor kitten. If you can't be responsible with your pets--even a farm cat, you should be held accountable. (9/1/08)

## **Petsguidestore: Move afoot to spay Chicago pets**

Burke was asked how the city (Chicago) would go about enforcing the ordinance, since cats are not licensed and dog licenses are widely-ignored. "When

you drive down the street and see a gang banger with all kinds of gang regalia walking along with two or three pit bulls, it's pretty simple for the policeman to raise the dog's tail and see whether or not it's spayed or neutered. If it's not, the gang member is in violation,"



Burke said, noting that street gangs operate dog-fighting rings. "I don't know of too many gang members [who] would be willing to subject themselves to this type of scrutiny," Burke said. (5/14/08)

## **Philadelphia Personal Injury Lawyer: Dog bite attacks more likely in unneutered dogs**

Hey Pennsylvanians, have your pets spayed or neutered! We have all heard Bob Barker tell us this at the end of The Price Is Right. Besides the obvious that we have too many dogs euthanized each year and need to control the dog population, the neutering of male dogs dramatically lessens the risk of a dog bite attack because neutering reduces aggression. Studies show that dog bite attacks in unneutered dogs are more than 2.6 times more likely to occur when compared to neutered dogs. (8/27/08)

## **Bob Barker Boulevard to be dedicated on September 26**



Run, don't walk, to join other animal lovers in the Ozarks on September 26 when Bob Barker Boulevard is officially dedicated. The celebration will be at 11:00 am at the intersection of Drury Lane and the former Brower Street. Please feel free to bring "spay/neuter" signs in support of the cause to which Mr. Barker has dedicated much of his life.

Hope to see lots of SNAP supporter on the 26<sup>th</sup>!

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Student/Senior (60 & over) | <input type="checkbox"/> \$125 Business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Individual                 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Lifetime |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$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**

***Solutions!***  
**PO Box 14354**  
**Springfield, MO 65814**

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