



Pet Overpopulation in Western Montana

In 2009, the Humane Society of Western Montana received 363 unwanted puppies and kittens. Fortunately, each and every one who entered our adoption program found a home. However, it is estimated that 3.7 million pets will be euthanized in shelters across the country this year; that's one every 8 seconds. Pet overpopulation is the number one killer of pets in this county. Even though HSWM is able to place all adoptable animals, it's still a struggle. Caring for that many young animals is a tremendous drain on our resources. Puppies and kittens require extra veterinary care and medications, special diets and hundreds of volunteer and staff hours. Many come to us in ill-health and need extensive care before adoption. Despite an improvement in the number of surplus animals in our community, we are still taking in unwanted puppies and kittens almost every day. In fact, we just took in ten four-week old kittens today.

Help us celebrate the 16th annual Spay Day USA which takes place on February 23, 2010. Spay Day USA is promoted nationally by many animal-related organizations that share a common goal: To end the needless euthanasia of companion animals in the United States. We join those organizations in an effort to inspire people to save lives by spaying or neutering pets and feral cats. Spay Day officially takes place on the last Tuesday of February - but events will be running all through the month!

The Humane Society of Western Montana recently received three spay/neuter grants totaling \$8,500 and we will be using these funds to host small- and large-scale low-income spay/neuter clinics during the month of February. Spaying and neutering exponentially reduces the number of unwanted animals. It also reduces many common pet 'problems' such as spraying and roaming. The health benefits are tremendous; pets live longer, remain healthier and risks of certain cancers are eliminated.

We will have a mobile spay/neuter fleet at the 4H building in Superior, Montana for a large-scale spay/neuter clinic on February 6 and 7. This is the first such clinic in Mineral County in over a decade. Mineral County desperately needs our help; 17% live below the federal poverty line and there is no veterinarian employed in the county. HSWM's clinic will have the capacity to spay/neuter and vaccinate approximately 250 dogs, cats, puppies and kittens. The overall

health of the pet population will increase immediately, and our goal is to schedule such clinics on a regular basis.

HSWM and Missoula City-County Animal Control will also offer low-income clinics throughout the month. If you can afford to go to a veterinarian, please do. But if you can't, check out the low-income clinics in western Montana. Do your part and spay/neuter your pet!

- Mineral County
 - 4H Fairgrounds in Superior, February 6 and 7, call 546-3858 for an appointment.
- Missoula County
 - February 10 & 17 for cats and kittens, call 549-HSWM for information.
 - February 11 & 25 for dogs and puppies, call 549-HSWM for information.
 - February 2, 9, 16, & 23 for cats and dogs, call 541-PETS for an appointment.

There are other ways to help if your pets are already spayed/neutered:

- Enter the Spay Day Online Pet Photo Contest (photocontest.humanesociety.org) and vote for your favorite pet! Each vote for photo costs just \$1, and you choose where the donation can go.
- Sponsor a dog or cat's surgery; go to www.myhswm.org/donatenow.
- Help all year long by organizing raffles, bake sales, "spay-ghetti" dinners and benefit concerts.
- Don't forget to talk to your friends and encourage them to participate in Spay Day USA.

Thank you for spaying/neutering your pet! Remember, it's good for you, your pet and your community. Together, we can ensure that every pet enjoys a long, happy and healthy life in a loving home.

Lora O'Connor has been employed by the Humane Society of Western Montana since 2000 and is thrilled to part of a great organization.