

Event Planning Guide

Spay Day USA

Nationwide Every February

The user-friendly guide to making your Spay Day USA event truly spaytacular!

- ❖ Choose the best type of event for you.
- ❖ Create a solid plan with helpful tips and resources.
- ❖ Be part of the official count—register your event and report your results. Doing so **may** qualify you to receive spay/neuter funds from the Spay Day Online Pet Photo Contest!



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

humanesociety.org/spayday



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Guide at a Glance

Spay Day newbies to long-time alumni will find loads of useful information within the pages of this three-part *Spay Day Event Planning Guide*. If you need help or have questions, please refer to the Q&As on page 3, visit our website at humanesociety.org/spayday, e-mail spayday@humanesociety.org, or call 301-258-1486.

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Welcome & Spay Day USA Overview

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A Message to All Our Spay Day USA Event Organizers

Welcome to the Spay Day USA Event Planning Guide! And thank you for joining The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) in this nationwide campaign to reduce pet overpopulation. You are helping to ensure healthier, happier lives for our nation's pets.

This *Guide* contains all the information you need to run an effective, exciting, and enjoyable Spay Day USA event. Use it to carry out the following action steps for your event:

Plan • **Register!** • Promote • Perform • **Report!**

You'll notice that we've put extra emphasis on **registering** and **reporting** your event or activity. **These are two vital steps you need to take.** They will enable us to trace just how much of a difference Spay Day USA makes, this year and every year. Covering each step thoroughly will ensure a successful event for you, for The HSUS, and most importantly, for the loyal animal companions who depend on our care. Further, if you represent a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization or municipal agency able to accept spay/neuter funding from nonprofits, registering and reporting your events are required in order to earn spay/neuter funds from the Spay Day Online Pet Photo Contest.

Please be sure to read the Spay Day USA Overview below, and the Spay Day Q&A on page three. This will give you the basic facts and background about the event and the different ways in which you can get involved.

All of us at The HSUS hope you have great fun planning, promoting, and running your Spay Day USA event and spreading the word about the many lifesaving benefits of spay/neuter. Together, we can create a kinder world in which every pet has a loving, lifetime home.

Sincerely,



Vicki Stevens
National Coordinator, Spay Day USA

Spay Day USA Overview

Spay Day USA takes place each year on the last Tuesday of February. Created by the Doris Day Animal League (DDAL) in 1995, Spay Day USA became a program of The HSUS when DDAL combined operations with The HSUS in 2006.

Spay Day USA is America's first and ONLY national day of action to promote the spaying or neutering of pets. During Spay Day USA, veterinarians and their staff, animal welfare professionals, business owners, and concerned citizens join forces nationwide to spay or neuter as many animals as possible, and to promote spay/neuter as an essential component of good pet health care, in addition to being an effective and humane means of decreasing the euthanasia of homeless animals in shelters.

During Spay Day USA's first fourteen years, participants spayed or neutered more than 1,418,500 animals! When you consider how prolific animals are, and that the average cost for shelters to handle each homeless animal is \$176 (see reference note 2, page 27), it is clear that Spay Day USA participants have, potentially, prevented millions of surplus births and saved millions of taxpayers' dollars.

Part I: Plan Your Event

“A vision without a task is but a dream, a task without a vision is drudgery, a vision and a task is the hope of the world.”

—From a church in Sussex, England, ca. 1730

Spay Day Q&A: Even Einstein Asked Questions

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How can I participate in Spay Day USA? There are three ways to participate: 1) **Organize** an event or activity, from distributing Spay Day USA information to offering discounted spay/neuter services to low-income animal guardians—no event is too big or too small. 2) **Volunteer** at an event—extra help is often needed. 3) **Sponsor** the spay or neuter of at least one animal—your own, a friend's or relative's, a feral cat, or a shelter animal awaiting adoption. Encourage everyone you know to do the same!

What qualifies as a Spay Day USA “event”? The main objective of Spay Day USA is to spay or neuter as many animals as possible in conjunction with the campaign. However, it is also important to raise money to provide spay/neuters for animals whose caretakers need assistance, and to inform people of the urgency and necessity of spaying or neutering their pets. Therefore, events generally fall into one or more of three categories: **spay/neuter** (page 5), **fundraising** (page 6), and **educational** (page 7).

Spay Day USA is officially the last Tuesday of February, and we'd like as many events as possible to fall on that day. However, any event you hold during the month of February qualifies as a Spay Day USA event.

Must I provide discounted or free spay/neuters? No. Most event organizers do offer special discounted or free spay/neuters (in particular, to low-income pet owners or feral cat colony caretakers), but it is not a requirement of Spay Day USA.

Is Spay Day USA for cats and dogs only? No. While Spay Day USA was originally created to specifically address cat and dog overpopulation, many other species popular as pets are euthanized in shelters, too. Spaying and neutering are also important for the well being of rabbits, ferrets, guinea pigs, rats, mice, hamsters, and gerbils (see page 27 for special information). Animals spayed or neutered during Spay Days past include these, as well as horses and other species.

Does Spay Day take place internationally as well? Yes! In 2008, Spay Day International events were held in Canada, Colombia, the Cook Islands, the Dominican Republic, Italy, Lebanon, Mexico, the Philippines, South Africa and Venezuela. Australia (www.ndn.org.au) and Ireland (www.spayweekireland.ie) host similar annual events promoting spay/neuter, too. If you live outside the United States, consider starting an annual Spay Day in your country. Review this *Event Planning Guide* for ideas, and contact Humane Society International (spayday@hsi.org) for more information about Spay Day International. www.hsi.org/spayday

Tips & Resources

- Spay Day USA always takes place on the last Tuesday of February. Mark your calendar!
- Use Spay Day USA to renew and increase interest in your ongoing spay/neuter programs. Even if you work for a low-cost spay/neuter clinic that provides discounted spay/neuters year round, you can, through the use of Spay Day USA promotional materials, generate excitement about Spay Day USA which can lead to an increase in donations and clients.
- Don't try and reinvent the gerbil wheel. Ask a seasoned expert who can offer advice or mentor you through the process. Check out the Event Profiles of past Spay Day USA events by visiting humanesociety.org/spayday.

What Color Are My Spots?

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Are you a shy Tabby or a gregarious Terrier? For best chances of success, you'll want to plan an event that suits your special skills and talents. Take a moment to reflect upon your temperament. If you find attending a party akin to having a root canal, then perhaps a more behind-the-scenes activity, like penning a letter to the editor (see page 17) or setting up a library display, is your cup of tea. On the other hand, if you are the life of the party, then rallying your community for a big neuter-a-thon or fundraiser could be just your speed.

Haven't a clue? Read through past Spay Day USA Event Profiles for ideas:
humanesociety.org/spayday

Identify the needs in your community. Contact animal care and control, shelters, rescue groups, veterinarians, and local government. Find out: Is there a high population of stray and feral cats and/or abandoned dogs in the community? Is there a high percentage of purebreds in the shelters? Is there a substantial population of low-income animal guardians and, if so, what resources are available to them?

Once you have knowledge of your community's priority needs, match this with your skills and interests. Identify available resources, such as key players, potential sponsors, and event location.

Successful events start with clear, achievable goals, a hardy dose of effort, and a bucketful of optimism!

Roll up your sleeves and, with pen in hand, list your achievable goals. Be specific—instead of “provide low-cost spay/neuters” or “raise money” write “neuter 50 cats at a charge of just 5 cents each” or “raise \$5,000.” Once you've identified your goals, a valuable tool that will help you reach them is a timeline—a sheet of paper that maps out graphically all the things you need to do and when they need to be done. To produce an accurate timeline, first list each goal, all the steps that need to be taken to reach each goal, and approximately how much time each step will take.

General questions to ponder: How much time do I have to devote to planning my event? How many people do I need to bring on board? Can I round up family and friends to help?

Exhaust resources for information and volunteers—the Internet (especially humanesociety.org/spayday and PETS911.com), publications, local government, local colleges/universities, local pet-related businesses like groomers and pet-sitters, etc.

Tips & Resources

- Form a Spay Day USA team! Bring together individuals with complementary skills and you'll improve your event's success.
- Gather and compile the facts, information, and available resources before you decide on your event.
- Find out if an event is already taking place near you; visit humanesociety.org/spaydayfind. If there is, share resources, join forces, or have your event fulfill a different community need.
- Don't get overwhelmed! Once your main goals are identified, list each action step into manageable little chunks. And delegate if necessary. Remember—Rome wasn't built in a day!

Spay Today For a Better Tomorrow!

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By far, the most popular way to participate in Spay Day USA is to organize some sort of special spay/neuter promotion to motivate animal guardians to make that spay/neuter appointment NOW!

In order to host a successful spay/neuter event, it is helpful to know your community's particular obstacles to spay/neuter. This is where your event pre-planning comes in handy. For example, do local animal guardians procrastinate because they don't view spay/neuter as a priority? Or is the cost of spay/neuter in your area prohibitive?

Following are just a few ideas that have worked well for other Spay Day USA event organizers. Feel free to brainstorm new ones!

Ideas for Individuals

- Spaymania!—have an animal spayed or neutered: your pet; a free-roaming cat; a friend's, neighbor's, or family member's pet; a needy citizen's pet; or a shelter animal awaiting adoption. Encourage friends and neighbors to do the same!
- Super Volunteer—offer to assist with general duties (checking in/directing clients, watching recovering animals, making coffee, getting lunch) during your area's Spay Day USA spay/neuter event.

Ideas for Humane Organizations and Rescue Groups

- Invite a vet or vets to partner with you to increase the numbers of animals spayed or neutered during Spay Day USA. See pages 8-9 for tips.
- If you aren't currently spaying or neutering each adopted animal before releasing them to their new family, make a commitment to do so during the month of February in honor of Spay Day USA.
- If you have an onsite spay/neuter clinic or contract/partner with a particular vet or vets, see page 8 for additional ideas.

Beyond Spay Day USA

In just eight years, the state of New Hampshire altered 34,265 animals, lowered its euthanasia rate by 77%. You can achieve the same remarkable results in your state. See below, and page 28, for more information.

Tips & Resources

- Spay Day USA Event Profiles: humanesociety.org/spayday
- *How to Start a Spay/Neuter Program* and more: www.bestfriends.org/nomorehomelesspets/resourcelibrary/snindex.cfm
- Model spay/neuter programs, including New Hampshire's, referenced above: www.bestfriends.org/nomorehomelesspets/localnmhpprograms/mpindex.cfm

Fundraising For Fido . . . and Fluffy, too!

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Raising money to help subsidize the cost of spay/neuter surgeries is a valuable and greatly appreciated activity that will allow more animals to be altered. The money you raise can be applied toward the cost of surgeries performed during your Spay Day USA spay/neuter event, or donated to a local clinic to provide spay/neuter surgeries after Spay Day USA. Set a fundraising goal and plan a strategy for success! Keep yourself motivated by visualizing how many animals your efforts will help.

Oodles of Ideas!

- **Corporate Sponsorship**—many local businesses and affiliates of major organizations welcome the opportunity to raise their “good citizen” profile. Ask them to sponsor all or part of your event costs, or for a donation in kind—meeting space, volunteer labor, equipment, consulting, and/or food.
- **Shelter Open House**—show animals for adoption, set up information tables, and sell or raffle off goodies donated by sponsors.
- **Craft or Bake Sale**, or both! Get out the glitter or the chocolate chips, and enlist the help of family and friends!
- **Walk-a-thon**—invite people to bring their dogs!
- **Haircut-a-thon**—ask salons and groomers to participate!
- **Contest or Raffle**—ask businesses, shops, and restaurants to donate prizes.
- **Auction**—get local celebrities to donate items, as well as artists and retail stores alike. Or, auction off a date with a local celebrity, or that cute kennel manager from your local shelter!
- **Donate-a-Portion**—ask restaurants, stores, movie theaters, etc. to donate a portion of their profits on Spay Day USA to a local spay/neuter program. Publicize the event to ensure a large turnout!
- **Benefit Concert**—get local bands/musicians involved. Charge admission. Sell for profit donated goods or Spay Day USA merchandise (ask The HSUS about bulk discounts for nonprofits), and distribute Spay Day USA brochures!
- **Pet Portraits**—ask photographers to take pictures of people and their pets. Charge a solid fee and sell copies of photos and extras like frames, albums, etc.
- **Garage or Yard Sale**: ask the public to donate lightly used or new items for resale.

Tips & Resources

- Create and sell a limited edition item. Ask a screen printer to print your design on sellable items from shirts to canvas bags.
- February is the Month of Love!—Capitalize on Valentine’s Day. Sell heart-shaped dog and/or cat treats and urge people to “Have a Heart—Spay or Neuter Your Pet,” or “Do It For Love: Spay or Neuter.”
- Host an animal-friendly barbecue with delicious meatless or soy based foods and charge a fee for each plate. Ask local stores to donate the food or sell it to you at a discount.
- Add an educational component to your fundraising event by distributing Spay Day USA brochures.
- PARTY!
 - Theme Party: Valentine’s Day, Single’s Night, or that of the current Spay Day USA campaign.
 - Progressive Dinner Party: charge for each course, and have each course at a different home.
 - House Party: invite a representative from your local humane shelter to speak.

“Lack of money is no obstacle. Lack of an idea is an obstacle.”
—Anonymous

Education Creates Change

Educating people about spay/neuter—what it is, why it’s important, and where to get it done—can inspire them to take action. Spay Day USA educational activities can be performed alone or in conjunction with a spay/neuter and/or fundraising event.

Reaching Young Audiences

Kids are an important target audience. Most kids love animals and are very open to messages about their well-being. By instilling in children good attitudes about spaying or neutering their pets, you are helping to ensure a better future for animals.

- Arrange to give a presentation at a local school. Do it yourself, or enlist a humane educator from your local humane society, or your veterinarian.
- Hold an essay, poster, or coloring contest. Ask businesses to donate prizes, and print the winning entries in the newspaper or display them in a public place such as a library.
- Distribute buttons, stickers, and other kid-friendly items with positive spay/neuter messages.

Reaching the Public at Large

As the American Partnership for Pets states, “Spay/Neuter Benefits You, Your Pet, and Your Community.” It is important to make it clear to people how supporting spay/neuter is in their own best interest - and that the offspring of their unaltered animals could end up in a shelter.

- Distribute Spay Day USA materials. Ask businesses to display posters, your supermarket to insert brochures into shopping bags, or set up a table at a local event.
- Lobby your local legislators to issue a resolution declaring the last Tuesday in February “Spay Day USA” (see pages 10-11).
- Write a letter-to-the-editor (page 17) in support of Spay Day USA.
- Contact your local radio and TV stations to air public service announcements (pages 20-21).
- Organize free seminars at community colleges, churches, etc. Invite a vet, animal care and control officer, shelter staffer, or another expert to speak.
- Reserve your public library’s display case for the month of February and install a Spay Day USA exhibit.
- Place Spay Day USA ads in community theater, school, and sports programs.
- Display a Spay Day USA billboard along a busy highway. Contact The HSUS for artwork, available for a nominal fee.

- Save time by using the The HSUS’s Spay Day USA educational materials, such as posters, bookmarks, etc. Generally available in late fall. Visit humanesociety.org/spaydaystore
- Play SpayNow!: The Game of Taking Care of Your Pets. Online at www.nchumane.org/games/spaynow/index.html
- Organize a Competition: local schools compete to raise the most money.
- Fill a room with toy cats or dogs. Ask students to figure out, starting with two unaltered pets, how long it would take for that number of animals to be added to the population.
- Be certain you know your community’s laws regarding administering contests.

Tips & Resources

- Invite an expert to speak at your presentation. Visit Pets911.com for a listing of local animal shelters and veterinary clinics.
- Download free kids’ activity sheets, logo art, and other goodies at: humanesociety.org/spaydayaction
- Use the information in Part III of this guide to answer questions, or to create your own materials to distribute.

Event Ideas for Humane Organizations and Motivated Individuals

Spay Day USA is limited only by your imagination! There are innumerable ways to successfully promote spay/neuter and host spay/neuter clinics. A few suggestions are listed on this page, and in other sections of this booklet. You may also wish to review the event profiles of real Spay Day USA events held in previous years; do so online at: humanesociety.org/spayday

Event Ideas for Humane Organizations

Review

- “Guidelines for Proper Vetiquette” on page 9.
- “Event Ideas for Veterinarians” on page 12. Many of these ideas apply to humane organizations, too!
- Other event ideas in this booklet, on pages 3-12.
- Profiles of Spay Day USA events that have taken place in previous years: humanesociety.org/spayday

Join Forces with Local Veterinarians

If your organization does not have its own clinic or vet on staff, consider teaming up with a local clinic or clinics to provide them with needed services while they concentrate on performing spay/neuter surgeries:

- SpayTaxi (see page 12; liability issues may apply)
- Advertising
- Spay/neuter voucher distribution
- Screen clients for eligibility for low cost spay/neuter
- Monitor animals recovering from surgery
- Lunch! (and/or dinner, and/or snacks—depends on how long your Spay Day USA event is!)

If your organization does have its own spay/neuter clinic, you might wish to:

- Invite local vets to volunteer for a shift on Spay Day USA
- Host a special spay/neuter clinic, after hours.
- Invite a segment of the public not usually targeted for your clinics to bring their animals in to be spayed or neutered.
- Invite local vets to view/participate in a special seminar involving:
 - Pediatric age spay/neuter
 - High volume spay/neuter

Event Ideas for Individuals

Many of the event ideas sprinkled throughout these pages may also apply to motivated individuals wishing to organize a Spay Day USA event. As an individual, you can serve as a liaison between veterinarians and humane organizations, and volunteer for both in a nearly infinite number of ways. In addition, you can:

- Lobby your legislator(s) to issue a Spay Day USA Resolution (pages 10-11)
- Write letters to the editor (page 17)
- Contact radio and TV stations to run Spay Day USA Public Service Announcements (pages 20-21)
- Distribute Spay Day USA brochures and hang Spay Day USA posters (available from HSUS, page 29)
- Encourage family, friends, and neighbors to spay/neuter

Spay Day USA Guide to Proper “Vetiquette”

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Veterinarians are vital to the success of Spay Day USA—after all, only vets can perform spays and neuters! Follow these tips to build great working relationships with your community’s vets that will pay off in “spayeds”—for the animals!

Before Spay Day USA

- Be polite! When asking vets to participate in your Spay Day USA event, be respectful and courteous of their time. Ask when they might be available to talk or meet with you.
- Send them a friendly letter explaining what you have planned for Spay Day USA and how you’d like them to participate. Ask for their feedback, and be open to alternative ideas your vets may suggest.
- In lieu of a letter, or as a follow up to the letter, consider offering to bring breakfast or lunch to your vet at her or his practice, to further discuss your Spay Day USA plans.
- When you approach your vets for help, offer to do something for them, too. Ask how you might be of service to them.
- If you ask your vet to offer reduced cost or free spays and/or neuters, keep in mind that this request is expensive for them, as the costs must come out of their operating budgets. Suggest targeting your community’s neediest animal guardians, and consider holding a fundraiser to help subsidize the cost of the donated services.
- If there is no objection, publicize the names of all the veterinarians who assist with your Spay Day USA event. Include their names in all of your organization’s Spay Day USA press releases and advertisements, and on posters, flyers, and other materials.
- If a vet chooses not to participate this year, thank her or him for their time and consideration. Circumstances change, and perhaps this vet may be in a better position to collaborate with you next year.

During Spay Day USA

- Ask participating vets if it would be helpful if you provided yourself, your staff, or volunteers to assist during the event. Offer to clean cages, screen participants, do paperwork, run errands, or fetch lunch. Ask a local restaurant or caterer to donate the food.
- If your vets don’t object, distribute their contact information to everyone who attends your event—and who adopts an animal from your shelter or rescue organization (if applicable)—and recommend your vets for their future pet health care needs.

After Spay Day USA

- If your organization is subsidizing the cost of spays/neuters performed by your vet during Spay Day USA, be sure to reimburse the vet promptly!
- Thank all the vets who worked with you.

Personal Thanks

- Write “thank you” notes to your vet partners, as you would to any other contributor.
- Present each of your vet partners with an attractive Certificate of Appreciation, available for free from The HSUS to event organizers who report the results of their event(s) by the deadline. Each requested Certificate will be mailed to you, so you may personally present it to the vet. Consider framing the Certificate to make it even more special.
- Be creative! Throw a soy cheese pizza party, send a gift basket, etc.

Public Thanks

Some vets may prefer not to be thanked publicly for their charitable work. Before doing any of the following, be sure you have each vet’s permission.

- List your vets’ names in your organization’s newsletter (if applicable).
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper(s) congratulating and thanking your vets and their staff, or take out a paid ad.
- Refer new clients to your vets.
- Inform your local media that you will be honoring your vets with HSUS Certificates of Appreciation (see page 13, bottom).

Pass A Resolution. Resolutions (also called proclamations or commendations) are a great way to educate legislators and give an issue credibility in your community or state. Resolutions are statements signed by legislators that formally recognize a particular matter—in this case, the tragedy of pet overpopulation—and one means of tackling it; i.e., spaying or neutering cats and dogs.

Resolutions can also be used to designate a particular time period in honor of a cause. For example, the last Tuesday in February officially becomes “Spay Day USA.” The concept is simple, yet goes a long way to putting an issue on the political radar screen.

How to Get a Resolution Passed:

- **Form a Coalition**—contact organizations and interested individuals in your area to lobby for support of a resolution.
- **Organize a Letter Writing/Call-In Campaign to Local Politicians**—develop a list of local contacts, starting with friends and family, to write or call your city/county councilmembers, mayor, or governor to demonstrate interest in Spay Day USA.
- **Adopt a Resolution**—ask your mayor, city/county council chairperson, or governor to declare the last Tuesday in February “Spay Day USA.” Invite officials to sign the resolution at a public ceremony at city hall, the county office building, or on the steps of the capitol. Adapt and send the “Sample Resolution” on page 11.
- **Get ‘em to Show Up**—once your elected official agrees to sign, be sure to contact her or his office four to six weeks prior to your press event to request their presence. Closely coordinating details with their press office will maximize potential press interest in your event.
- **Show Appreciation**—be sure to thank your legislator and forward a summary of press attention to his or her office.
- **Celebrate**—after the resolution is signed, congratulate yourself and your coalition for making a big difference for animals!

Tips

- Careful planning will ensure you have time to:
 - Schedule the event. (Morning is best to give media plenty of time to meet deadlines.)
 - Draft a press release. (Fax or hand-deliver one or two days before the event. Follow up with a telephone call the afternoon before or the morning of your press conference.)
 - Prepare any statements you want to read on air or deliver to the press.
 - Arrange for a photographer to record the event for your own organization’s publication (especially if your legislator is to take part in a full press conference).
 - Track your press attention by collecting any newspaper or magazine clippings and monitoring your local news programs.
- During your letter writing and/or call-in campaign(s), be sure to provide all necessary contact information. Include a few simple bullet points on the importance of the resolution to assist your friends and family in their communication(s). You may also want to keep a running list of who has made contact, and when and what the reaction was—this will assist you in your lobbying efforts.
- Build on your new relationships with your local legislators to encourage them to do more for animals, such as create effective spay/neuter laws, or form a task force to study pet homelessness and develop a plan to successfully and humanely address it.

Sample Spay Day USA Resolution

SAMPLE SPAY DAY USA RESOLUTION

Office of the [Mayor, County Council or Governor]

Resolution

Designating Tuesday, February 24, 2009, as "Spay Day USA"

WHEREAS, pets provide companionship to more than 71,000,000 households in the United States; and

WHEREAS, humane societies and animal shelters have to put down more than four million cats, dogs and rabbits each year, many of whom are healthy and adoptable, due to a lack of critical resources and public awareness; and

WHEREAS, this tragic overpopulation of pets costs citizens and taxpayers of this country millions of dollars annually through animal service programs aimed at coping with the millions of homeless animals; and

WHEREAS, spaying and neutering has been shown to dramatically reduce the overpopulation of pets and feral cats, proving to be a wise investment in saving animal lives and taxpayer dollars; and

WHEREAS, veterinarians, national and local animal protection organizations, and private citizens worked together to ensure the spaying or neutering of more than 32,500 pets and feral cats through "Spay Day USA" in 2008; and

WHEREAS, veterinarians, national and local animal protection organizations, and private citizens have joined together again to advocate the spaying and neutering of pets and feral cats on "Spay Day USA 2009":

Now, therefore, be it RESOLVED by the [local or state government body], that February 24, 2009, is designated "Spay Day USA." The [mayor, county council or governor] is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of [city, county or state] to observe the day by having their own cats, dogs, and rabbits spayed or neutered or by sponsoring the spaying or neutering of another person's pet.

[SEAL] Signature _____ Date _____

Tips & Resources

- Some legislators allow you to submit resolution/proclamation requests online. Visit your community's Website to see if this feature is offered. Go to www.fund.org and click on "Find My Legislators" in the left column.
- Invite local media to cover the resolution signing ceremony. Newspapers can do feature stories on local experts or volunteers in conjunction with their participation in Spay Day USA.

Event Ideas for Veterinarians

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Veterinarians are vital to the success of Spay Day USA. After all, without your involvement, no spays or neuters would be performed! Following are just a few suggested, mutually-beneficial ways you can participate in Spay Day USA. If you have additional ideas, please let us know!

Event Ideas for Veterinarians and Their Staff

- Form or join a coalition of local veterinarians and hold a city, county, or even statewide Spay Day USA event!
- Offer your existing clients—or, only new clients—a special discount on all spay/neuter surgeries performed during the month of February, the last week of February, or just on the last Tuesday of February (Spay Day USA).
- Contact your local animal shelter and volunteer to spay or neuter a certain number of adoptable animals at no charge. Ask the shelter to provide the animals' adopters with your business card for follow-up health care visits.
- If a local animal shelter contacts you, be receptive to discussing how you might partner with them to promote Spay Day USA.
- If your community has a mobile spay/neuter unit, volunteer to perform spays or neuters for a shift.
- Hold an after-hours party! Schedule special free or discounted spay/neuter surgeries when your clinic is normally closed.
- Educate Clients: "Sell" pet owners on the benefits of spay/neuter.
- Provide special, discounted spay/neuters to low income households. Partner with social service agencies to identify qualifying households.
- Provide special, discounted spay/neuters to Good Samaritan caretakers of free-roaming cat colonies.
- Match Program—for every animal someone brings in for sterilization, alter a shelter animal or free-roaming cat for free or at a discount.
- Buddy Program—for every animal someone brings in for sterilization, alter their friend's pet for free or at a discount.
- Dental Duo—for every client who schedules a teeth cleaning in honor of National Pet Dental Health Month, provide a discount voucher for a spay/neuter. Or vice versa.
- Pediatric Spay/Neuter—review, promote and distribute scientific findings on pediatric spay/neuter to colleagues (below, and page 28).
- Free Gift—give a gift to every client who has a pet spayed or neutered for Spay Day USA. Ask local businesses to donate the gifts.
- SpayTaxi—have your staff provide a special pick up/drop off service for housebound pet owners (liability issues may apply).
- Spread the Word—display Spay Day USA posters and distribute brochures and other educational materials.
- Bundle Services—offer low-cost sterilization with vaccinations and pet I.D.

- If you distribute free or discounted spay/neuter certificates, consider charging recipients a refundable deposit or nominal fee. This will help guard against last minute no-shows.
- Order a free Spay Day USA PSA from PETS 911 (pages 20-21) and promote Spay Day USA on local radio and TV stations.
- While most veterinarians who participate in Spay Day USA offer special discounts or volunteer their services, this is an appreciated and effective—but not required—feature of the program.

Event Planning Checklist

Whether you're a force of one or fifty, you'll find this checklist invaluable to your event success!

- Take stock of my skills and available resources.
 - Research and define my community's priority needs.
 - Review past Spay Day USA event profiles at: humanesociety.org/spayday
 - Read through this booklet for ideas.
 - Decide upon the type of event I wish to organize.
 - List my goals and develop a timeline.
 - Register my event online at humanesociety.org/spaydaylogin
 - Register as soon as possible, beginning in December.
 - Provide a summary description of your planned event, including all relevant information people need to participate.
 - Include opportunities for donating and volunteering, if applicable.
 - Download, order, and/or create promotional/educational materials for my event. Visit humanesociety.org/spaydayaction for current action kit items, special freebies, and merchandise!
 - Advertise my event.
 - Photograph my event.
 - Track during my event:
 - Number and sex of cats, dogs, and/or other animals spayed or neutered.
 - Amount of money raised for spay/neuter.
 - Number of people exposed to the spay/neuter message.
 - Report the results of my event online humanesociety.org/spaydaylogin
 - Report results by the March deadline (for 2009, the deadline is March 9th).
 - Provide data tracked during event.
 - Provide summary description of actual event.
 - Thank everyone who helped!
 - Vets, vet techs, and other staff
 - Humane society personnel
 - Lay volunteers
 - Sponsors
 - Begin planning for next year!
-
- If you don't promptly register and report the results of your event, you may be left out of the official count, and you won't be eligible to win a great prize in the "Every Spay/Neuter Counts!" contest.
 - Photograph your event for maximum exposure! Include copies of the photos in media kits, sponsorship proposals, and other promotional materials, and send copies to The HSUS for possible inclusion on our website.
 - Keep records! Good records this year will save time and effort—and help you build on your success—next year. In addition to copies of your registration and report form(s), keep: contact info for participating veterinarians, volunteers, sponsors, etc.; a list of useful references; notes on what worked and what didn't; and goals/ideas for the next Spay Day USA!
 - Report the results of your event by the March deadline (March 7th for Spay Day USA 2008) and you may request from The HSUS attractive Certificates of Appreciation to present to your event's Most Valuable Players—vets, vet techs, humane society staff, lay volunteers, and even yourself!

Tips & Resources

- Always report your best estimate if you don't know the exact results. A good guess is better than nothing at all!
- Give us all the noteworthy details on your event. Enquiring minds want to know!
- Report by the March deadline (March 9, 2009) to request Certificates of Appreciation for your MVPs (and, if otherwise eligible, to receive funding from the Spay Day Online Pet Photo Contest) .
- Contact the photography department at local high schools and colleges to see if you can find a budding Ansel Adams to cover your event!

Part II: Promote Your Event

“The best way to get a good idea is to get lots of ideas.”

—Linus Pauling

Attract Media Attention

Getting media coverage of your event is crucial to ensuring as many people as possible hear about the many important, lifesaving benefits of spay/neuter.

While The HSUS promotes Spay Day USA nationally, it's up to you to get the word out locally. Here's how:

- Create a Media List—compile a thorough and well-targeted list. Research your local media in the Yellow Pages under “Newspapers,” “Television Stations and Broadcasting Companies,” and “Radio Stations and Broadcasting Companies.” The web is another good source. Try your community’s website, or dir.yahoo.com/News_and_Media

Organize your list into the following categories:

- **Print Media:** Daily newspapers, weekly newspapers, local magazines, local newsletters, and specialty publications (non-profit organizations, community clubs or groups). For each entry, list all pertinent contact information including the names of the news, city, or assignment editor; the features editor; the editorial page editor; and the person responsible for the community calendar or bulletin board.
 - **Electronic Media:** Local television and cable stations, local radio stations, local Websites (pet-related and community calendars). For each entry, list all pertinent contact information including the names of the assignment editor, public service director, and the people responsible for booking talk show guests.
- Write a Tip Sheet (page 19)—and submit it to each contact person on your media list.
 - Write a Press Release (page 18)—and submit to each contact person on your media list.
 - Write a Letter to the Editor or Op-Ed (page 17).
 - Submit TV and radio Public Service Announcements (PSAs, pages 20-21) to identified stations on your electronic media list.
 - Make a Media Kit (page 22) to distribute to VIPs.
 - Follow-up—it is VERY important to follow-up with the media you contacted to make sure they received your information. It is VERY important to contact them the morning of your event (early), as well, reminding them of the exciting details!
 - Follow-up AGAIN!—contact the media who were not able to attend but may be interested in running your story after the fact.
 - Take Good Photos—this will extend the life of your event and make a bigger impact. Local media, including websites, may request them.
- Make a separate list of who does live, on the scene reporting (TV & radio). Here's how to get them to cover your event:
 1. Organize a newsworthy event (page 16).
 2. Send your enticing one page news release.
 3. Make sure your news release was received.
 4. Contact the media outlet early (8/9 am) the morning of your event to remind them.
 - Use Your Connections! — contact everyone who can spread the word fast and far. Beauty salon gossips to employees at a radio station!
 - Piggy-Back—promote your upcoming event at an existing event or well-trafficked public space. For example, pass out info to a line of movie-goers, people exiting a sports arena, etc.
 - DO NOT MISS DEADLINES! Organize your media contacts into daily, weekly, or monthly categories listing deadlines for each. Daily newspapers/TV and radio stations have short deadlines, so be sure to contact them NO LATER THAN the third week of January.
 - Be a journalist and/or photographer. Cover a Spay Day USA event in your area. Then write an article, op-ed piece, or letter to the editor. Include your age—this may help get you published!

Tips & Resources

- Build Your Media List—Both www.mediapost.com and dir.yahoo.com/News_and_Media have extensive directories for U. S. media. For other countries, try newslink.org and abyznewslinks.com

Make It Newsworthy

Reporters cover interesting stories because interesting stories sell papers. Sell them your story and you'll gain a lot of exposure. Here's how to make your event irresistible:

- Prepare—have your thoughts and materials prepared ahead of time. Create sound bites (short, catchy phrases) for interviews and articles.
 - Important Points—organize and state them clearly and briefly.
 - Local Angle—focus on what people in your community are doing to promote Spay Day USA.
 - Milestones—create a strong headline for the media. If your event is saving 1,000 lives or reaching its 500th (or even 50th) spay/neuter, it will have a better chance of being covered.
 - Mayor/Governor Seal of Approval—ask your legislator to issue a Spay Day USA Resolution (pages 10-11). Getting local TV coverage of the signing is a great way to launch your campaign.
 - Promote—Make “Spay Day USA” and contact info visible for the cameras. Ensure logos, banners, t-shirts, and other visual identification are prominent when the media is around.
 - Join the Gang—the media can do a feature story on local experts like a veterinarian in conjunction with their participation with Spay Day USA.
 - Money Talks—crunch numbers and show how many tax dollars you are saving the community with your efforts. Emphasize and promote this.
 - Impact—the more beings effected by your event, the more newsworthy it is. Not only do tax dollars get saved but many animals' lives improve, and when a community takes care of its problems, everyone benefits.
 - Originality—Something new and fresh like your event could be just the story the media is looking for. So make it fresh every year!
 - Everybody Loves a Good Fight—Covering opposing factions will get the media's attention: Sterilization vs. procreation; puppy mills vs. adoption.
 - Proximity—The closer the event is to the media source, the more likely the media will consider it news.
 - Star Power—Any celebrity involvement, from an endorsement to their actual presence, has the potential to boost media coverage immensely.
-
- Props will get you noticed. Construct an oversized check to show how many tax dollars your event saves the community.
 - The media have the challenge of coming up with new stories every day, week after week, month after month, to fill their pages and air slots. It isn't always easy. Help them do their jobs, and you will guarantee yourself (and through you, the animals) media allies. Plan your event well, communicate it effectively, and be cooperative.
 - Make sure you articulate and present yourself as serving the community, rather than simply trying to promote your event.
 - Get artistic! Create posters and other visual promotion for an event. Have your teacher help organize a contest for the winning poster.

Tips & Resources

- Humane Interest—tell a story about your event the audience can get emotionally invested in. Follow a dog adoption, a sterilization surgery, etc. Learn about the power of story: www.agoodmanonline.com/publications/storytelling/index.html
- Learn “How to Get the Press on Your Side”: www.frugalmarketing.com/dtb/press.shtml

Write a Letter to the Editor

Writing a letter to the editor is one of the most effective (and least expensive!) ways to educate people about the importance of spay/neuter and to promote your Spay Day USA event.

Follow these tips to ensure your letter gets published!

- **Read**—existing letters in the publications you want to get published in and identify what makes it to print.
- **Get It Right**—address your letter, “Dear Editor.” Type it, double-spaced, and follow any specific publication guidelines.
- **Keep It Short**—preferably 100-150 words (10 to 15 typed lines). Three hundred words are the maximum most papers or magazines will publish without cutting.
- **Grab ‘em!**—make the first sentence count, so they keep reading.
- **Clarity**—write concise sentences and stay focused on your one issue.
- **Timing Is Everything**—if you are responding to something already published, send it in no more than three to four days after the publication hits the newsstand.
- **Get Real**—sign your letter and include home and work telephone numbers. Some papers will want to verify that you wrote it.
- **Big Fish, Small Pond**—don’t just send your letters to the big publications. More often, you’ll have better luck getting published in smaller publications.

[insert Date]

Letter to the Editor
[insert Name of Publication]
[insert Street Address]
[insert City, State Code, Zip]

Dear Editor:

More than four million pets are put down in U.S. shelters each year. That's one every eight seconds. Often these animals are the offspring of cherished family pets, even purebreds. Maybe someone's dog or cat got out just one time or maybe the litter was intentional, but efforts to find enough good homes failed. The result is that homeless animals have to be euthanized because there are more pets entering shelters than there are people able to provide them with loving care. By spaying or neutering your pet, you will have peace of mind knowing that his or her offspring won't be put down in a shelter.

The fifteenth annual Spay Day USA takes place on February 24, 2009. To volunteer or have an animal spayed or neutered, simply call [insert local number] or visit humanesociety.org/spayday [or insert local contact information]. Together, we can ensure every pet enjoys a long, happy, and healthy life in a loving home.

Sincerely,
[Insert Signature]
[Insert Typed Name]
[Insert Address]
[Insert Contact Details]

- **Write an Op-ed piece.** Op-eds (short for “Opinion/Editorials”) are longer articles of 500-800 words that summarize an issue, develop an argument, and propose a solution. As with letters to the editor, review the op-ed pieces in targeted publications to get a sense of what gets published. Send the article to the Editorial Page Editor with a cover letter explaining why you feel it should be printed. The article has a better chance of getting printed if it is signed by an expert or celebrity--preferably a well-known local figure, and one who has some link to the cause.
- Avoid worn-out clichés, exaggeration, weak puns and run-on sentences. Keep it short with punchy sentences.
- Target a few publications and start writing! This is an excellent way to improve writing and communication skills, and vocabulary, too. And if you get published, it is an addition to your future college application/resume.
- “Letters to the Editor” sections are widely read. If published, your letter is sure to reach a large number of people to whom you might not otherwise have access.

Tips & Resources

- **Credibility**—mention anything about yourself that lends clout (your status as a board member or longtime volunteer, your education, who you know, etc.).
- Avoid negative language and hyperbole.
- Write affirmatively.

Write a News Release

A news release (also referred to as a press release), is a brief announcement of a newsworthy event. It is sent to media outlets to interest them in covering your story. News directors receive hundreds of releases every day, so yours must look professional, present the facts quickly, and grab their attention in seconds!

THE DO'S!

- **TYPE**, double-spaced on letterhead or on 8.5" x 11" standard white paper with your contact information.
- Leave wide margins (at least 1") all around for editor/reporter notes.
- Indent five spaces to begin new paragraphs, and do not hyphenate words at the end of a line.
- Always begin the body with the dateline: "CITY, State, Month, Day, Year" followed by 2 dashes (--).
- **PROOFREAD** carefully for mistakes.
- **FACT CHECK** for accuracy.

THE DON'TS!

- Don't continue your release on the backside of the paper. One page is best. If you can't keep your release to one page, use the format illustrated here.
- Don't use zeroes for time (e.g., use "11 a.m." not "11:00").
- Don't use letters after numbered dates (e.g., August "22" not "22nd").

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**[ORGANIZATION] IN [CITY] PARTNERS WITH
THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES
TO PROMOTE NATIONAL SPAY DAY USA**

Local Citizens Urged to Spay or Neuter Pets

[insert CITY], [insert State], [insert Month, Day, Year] -- [insert Organization's Name] will participate in Spay Day USA, a national campaign of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), to promote the life-saving benefits of spay/neuter, when it [or sponsor name, if applicable] hosts the [insert name or brief description of your event] at [insert place name, address] on [insert day, date and time of event].

[insert Local Dignitary/Celebrity Name if appropriate] will open the event, which will feature [list most interesting highlights of your planned event].

MORE

[ORGANIZATION] IN [CITY] TAKING PART IN SPAY DAY USA -- 2

"Spay/neuter protects pet health, improves pet behavior, and lessens the burden on animal shelters and taxpayers," says [insert Name of Local Spokesperson, title]. "We are inviting our citizens to sponsor the spay or neuter of at least one animal in honor of Spay Day USA 2009."

This year marks the fifteenth annual Spay Day USA. Since Spay Day USA's inception in 1995, participants have altered an estimated 1,418,500 animals. It has been a proud achievement of Spay Day USA participants like [name of your organization or event] and other spay/neuter programs that the number of homeless animals euthanized in the U.S. has fallen from approximately 13.5 million in 1973 to about four million currently.

[Insert a brief paragraph/boilerplate information about your organization here, if appropriate].

For more information, please visit [insert URL of organization and/or SpayDayUSA.org].

- Before deciding how and when to deliver your release, establish what you want to accomplish. Do you want your news item printed/broadcast BEFORE the event? Do you want the media to attend and cover the event? Or both? Generally, activities such as spay/neuter clinics, tabling events and fundraisers fall in the "BEFORE" category. In this case, mail your releases at least three weeks before the event. These releases are probably being sent to the "Community Calendar" or "Bulletin Board" sections.
- GET MAXIMUM VALUE FOR YOUR EFFORTS—The day before your event, call the news desk to inform them you are holding a newsworthy event the next day. Do not read your entire news release to them. Just briefly describe your event, state your phone number in case more information is needed, and mention that you sent a release to the news desk. If you have a good relationship with a particular reporter, call that person to see if he or she received your release.
- TIMING—You want the media to arrive at your event when the height of activity is occurring. Tell the press to arrive a little later than your start time so everything they might want to cover is ready to go or already underway when they arrive.
- JUST THE FACTS, MA'AM—Avoid hype. Stick to the facts.

Tips & Resources

- The final paragraph of your news release should describe your organization's mission. This is called the "boilerplate," a distillation of only the essence.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: [insert Month, Date, Year]

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] IN [CITY] PARTNERS WITH
THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES TO PROMOTE NATIONAL SPAY DAY USA

Local Citizens Urged to Spay or Neuter Their Pets

WHAT: As part of Spay Day USA, a national program of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), [insert Organization name] will host the [insert Event Name] to promote spay/neuter as a humane and effective means of reducing the number of animals who are put down in shelters each year.

WHEN: [insert Day of Week], [insert Date], at [insert Time] OR from [insert Beginning Time] to [insert Ending Time]

WHERE: [insert Location]
[insert Street Address], [insert City]
[insert Parking Information, Directions (if applicable)]

WHY: The benefits of spay/neuter are far-ranging and numerous. Altered animals tend to be healthier and have fewer behavioral problems. They don't contribute to the overpopulation problem, so fewer animals end up homeless in shelters or on the streets. Currently, shelter workers nationwide are forced to euthanize an estimated three to four million homeless cats and dogs each year, at an average cost to taxpayers of \$176 per animal. During Spay Day USA, each humane American is encouraged to help solve this problem by sponsoring the spay or neuter of at least one cat or dog. Since Spay Day USA's inception in 1995, participants have altered over 1,000,000 animals, saving potentially millions of lives and tax dollars.

WHO: [Insert Organization's Name and/or Participants' Background Information]

We cordially invite your coverage.

Contact: [Media/Publicity Contact Name]
[Phone]
[E-mail (if applicable)]

- Many media outlets encourage readers and viewers to submit story ideas or news "tips" through their websites. Visit your local media outlets' websites to see if this feature is included. This tip sheet format is an ideal way to submit your information to these sites.
- DO NOT MISS DEADLINES!

Tips & Resources

- If you have time and resources for only one media activity, this is it! Send this tip sheet to your local newspaper. Such information is often posted in "Community Calendar" sections of local publications.
- If possible, go a step further by submitting a letter to the editor (page 17) as well.
- If you have the time and resources and are planning a large event, consider also: Sending your tip sheet to each person on your media list (page 12), writing an op-ed piece (page 17), and/or creating and distributing a full media kit (page 22).

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are short (10 to 60 seconds) ads aired on radio and TV stations, designed to raise awareness of significant social issues in an effort to stimulate positive change. The Federal Communications Commission requires stations to air PSAs to balance the effects of paid advertising and to present balanced coverage of issues, so the airtime is generally free to nonprofit community groups. As a result, PSAs present a cost-effective way of reaching the broadest possible audience.

Send stations a personalized PSA from PETS 911 (see below), or submit a PSA script (your own or one written by The HSUS, page 21) to radio stations and request that it be read on the air.

PSA DOs:

- Simple. Clear. Concise—suggest a call to action, such as “spay or neuter your pet” or “contact us for a Spay Day USA brochure.” Have enough literature available and the fulfillment worked out before distributing your PSA.
- Distribution—target the best media outlets for your PSA.
- Deadlines/Timing—find out each station’s deadline (may be four or more weeks in advance of your event) and optimum submission times.
- Maximum Flexibility—offer a selection of formats, sizes, and lengths to better your chances of getting played. Ask about appropriate video and audio formats, and different spot lengths.
- Noticeable Packaging—have a clearly defined benefit statement on the package exterior.
- Public Service Director—send your PSAs to the “Public Service Director” of your targeted radio and television stations. Include a letter stating the purpose of the PSA and why it is important to local viewers. Include with TV PSAs a storyboard or brief description so the TV “gatekeeper” can see what the spot looks like without viewing it. Double-space your letter and include at top left:
Beginning Date: first day PSA should be read
Stop Date: last day PSA should be read
PSA length in seconds
PSA word count
- Follow-Up—call to be sure each station received your PSA.
- Show Appreciation—thank the media outlets that run your PSA.

PSA DON'TS:

- Too Much Isn't a Good Thing—don't cram too much information into your PSA. You'll weaken the message and create an unlasting impression.
- Size Matters—don't produce a “one size fits all” PSA; send the media the sizes and formats they need.
- Spokesperson—don't use a “talking head” unless the person has presence and enhances the PSA message. Utilize celebrities whose public personas are consistent with your message and campaign objective.
- Produce minority materials. Our society is diverse in its composition, and Hispanic outlets need Spanish language material.
- Include a copy of your PSA in your media kit.
- Some stations may require proof of nonprofit status before airing your PSA, so be prepared.
- The majority of PSAs run as a community service free of charge by the media. The media often looks for local causes to promote, so tell them about Spay Day USA and your event!
- In addition to issue-oriented PSAs, radio and TV stations will air announcements of meetings or events on a “community calendar.” If the event is open to the public, stations are more willing to tell their audiences when the event will take place, or that a billboard celebrating Spay Day USA will be unveiled. This is an excellent way to publicize your group's event!

Tips & Resources

- Radio and TV PSAs promoting Spay Day USA and spay/neuter are available to registered Spay Day event organizers FREE from PETS 911. Order via humanesociety.org/spayday
- Radio PSA Scripts--the four standard lengths for a PSA are: 10 seconds (25 to 30 words), 20 seconds (45 to 50 words), 30 seconds (60 to 75 words), and 60 seconds (120 to 150 words).

10 seconds (25-30 words)

Spay or neuter your pet for Spay Day USA on February 24th. It's good for you, your pet, and your community. Visit humanesociety.org/spayday or call [insert local phone number] to learn more.

Spay/neuter improves pet health and behavior while lessening the burden on overcrowded animal shelters and taxpayers. Visit humanesociety.org/spayday or call [insert local phone number] to participate in Spay Day USA on February 24th.

20 seconds (45-50 words)

Because it's not just rabbits who multiply like rabbits, The Humane Society of the United States urges you to spay or neuter your pet for Spay Day USA on February 24th. Spay/neuter improves pet health and behavior and saves tax dollars. Call [insert local phone number] or visit humanesociety.org/spayday to learn more.

Pet overpopulation forces our country's shelter workers to euthanize millions of cats, dogs, and other animals—at a cost of millions of dollars—each year. Spay/Neuter is a proven solution to this crisis. Visit humanesociety.org/spayday or call [insert local number] to find out how you can join in Spay Day USA on February 24th.

30 seconds (60-75 words)

It's not just rabbits who multiply like rabbits! Millions of homeless cats and dogs in shelters await adoption. Sadly, about 4 million each year are euthanized. That's why you need to spay or neuter your pet. Spay/neuter also improves pet health and behavior, saves tax dollars, and increases the quality of life for all. Visit humanesociety.org/spayday or call [insert phone number] to participate in The Humane Society of the United States' 14th annual Spay Day USA on February 24.

It's hard to imagine, but pet overpopulation forces our country's shelter workers to euthanize millions of cats, dogs and other pets—at a cost of millions of tax dollars—each year. Spay/neuter is a proven solution to this crisis. Call [insert local phone number] or visit humanesociety.org/spayday to find out how you can join in The Humane Society of the United States' Spay Day USA on February 24.

- When producing a PSA, adopt a team approach by bringing all the people who will be involved to the table in the planning stages. Everyone should understand the objectives, audiences, timing, distribution, etc. Everyone should understand what spot lengths the media find most useful, what topics are being aired, what time of the year is best to distribute.
- PSAs should not be manipulative, condescending, or overloaded with words and too many messages.
- "At the end of the PSA, you don't want people to feel miserable; you want to make them feel like they want to do something. You don't want to make the viewer feel helpless and you don't want to make the cause seem hopeless. With PSAs, the reward that the [viewer or listener] gains from doing something is an emotional one. That is a big difference." —Andy Langer, Vice Chairman, Lowe & Partners Worldwide Agency

Tips & Resources

- There are really two audiences of PSAs: One is the audience you want to reach, the other is the scheduler at the station. If they don't like the spot, they won't air it as much. So make it appealing, not preachy. Make it bright and creative.
- PSAs should be relevant to their audience, interesting or entertaining, and leave people with a focused message that can be distilled into one sentence. Most importantly, the message should inspire action.
- A successful PSA resonates with the audience on an emotional level that ultimately results in attitude and/or behavior changes.
- Tailor your PSA to each media outlet (TV, radio, print), using the inherent strengths that each medium provides.

Make a Media Kit

A media kit (also known as a press kit) is a packet of information to distribute to anyone who can have a positive impact on your event, such as journalists, potential sponsors, the mayor, your state representatives, etc. A media kit helps to convey your message, and makes you look professional.

Your Media Kit May Include:

- Pitch Letter. This is the first thing your reader sees in the kit. Create a solid first impression, so they'll keep reading! Explain why they should care about what you're telling them. List the enclosed items. Let them know you are available for an interview or questions. Include a "p.s." which is often the first thing read!
- News Release.
- Fact Sheets—about your organization (a brochure, if you have one), Spay Day USA (a tip sheet is ideal; see page 19), pet overpopulation (page 25), and spay/neuter (pages 26-27).
- Sample News Story. Editors see ready-to-print stories as an easy way to fill up empty space. Cover your own story like a journalist!
- Copies of relevant documents.
- Photographs. Type the following on a label and place on the back of each photo: what, where, when, and photographer credit. (Never write on the back of a photograph with a pen. The ink will rub off and damage other photographs.)
- Biographies of Key Individuals and "Mug Shots" (head-and-shoulders photos). Type and place an identifying label on the back of each photo.
- Testimonials, celebrity statements.
- Business Cards. Provide two—one to keep, one to pass to an associate.

Maximize Your Kit's Effectiveness

- Packaging is Everything—insert all your kit's contents in an attractive, two-pocket folder (found in office supply stores). Take time to organize everything neatly.
- Get Noticed—busy editors sort through piles of media kits all day, so make yours stand out. Put a unique photo, illustration, or copy on the cover that screams, "open me!" (in a professional way).
- Follow Up—follow up calls provide the perfect opportunity for editors to ask questions or schedule an interview.
- Don't rush. If you don't have time to put together a professional, well thought out media kit, focus your energy on a really solid press release and launch your amazing media kit next year!
- Media kits are a powerful publicity tool that will generate media coverage and help sell your event/organization to sponsors, donors, and new members.

Tips & Resources

- Contact info should be on every item in your kit.
- Include all the facts you want the media to know. Often reporters on deadline will cut n' paste entire sections of your material for their article.
- Don't wait until you need it. Tight budgets and deadlines make it hard to put together a kit, but start small, then add to it as time goes by.

Do a Radio and/or TV Talk Show Interview

You can reach thousands of people through talk shows. However, before you can do an interview, you must get the radio or TV station interested! Here's how:

- Send a Letter—to the talk show's booking agent (call the station first to find out her or his name) several weeks before your event. Similar to the media kit pitch letter, create a solid first impression with your credentials (or those of your organization's spokesperson), explain what you'd like to discuss, and convey why they and their audience should care about what you're telling them. Be sure to provide your contact information (telephone number and e-mail address).

Interview Preparation

- Research—familiarize yourself with the show's style and format, so you'll know what to expect.
- Be an Expert—study the issue inside and out. Anticipate and be prepared to answer difficult questions. Memorize facts (pages 25-27) and quotes and have sound bites ready.
- Key Points—make a list of up to five things you want to get across during the interview and be prepared to back them up.
- Practice Makes Perfect—have a friend play talk show host and interview you. Tape the interview with an audio or video recorder for reference on how you can improve.
- Follow Up—it's crucial to make sure people get your media kit. Follow up calls also provide the perfect opportunity for editors to ask questions, or schedule an interview.
- It's All Surface—if appearing on TV, follow these general rules: Don't wear patterns or solid black, white, or bright red. Do wear plain, solid colors others than those just listed (green and blue show up especially well). Smile, and don't fidget or touch your face or hair.
- Sound Bites—the media looks for brief, catchy phrases to plug into a 60-second story. So, only express the most important points and make them concise and strong. Sample sound bites:

“Spay/neuter is good for you, your pet, and your community.”

“A shelter animal is euthanized every 8 seconds. That's four million each year.”

- Appoint a Spokesperson. Your spokesperson should be well groomed, articulate, knowledgeable of the facts, and have media kits on hand.
- While your spokesperson will be the primary media contact, everyone at the event should be familiar with the main points, as reporters will often want additional comments from others involved.
- Don't say anything in an interview that you wouldn't want edited out and aired separately!
- MEDIA WISDOM: If you have the time, energy, and resources to create and run a special event of any type or size for Spay Day USA, make sure you get maximum value from your efforts by working to obtain media coverage. Call the person to whom you sent your press materials to ensure she or he received them. Offer to set up an interview with, or get commentary from, the head of your organization, or a participating veterinarian. Be persistent but not pesky, letting reporters know you are available to answer questions both before and after Spay Day USA. Establishing a personal rapport gets your name in front of the media and identifies you as an expert resource, available for future comment on animal protection issues that arise in your community. Your goal is to become a resource for the media on pet overpopulation and animal welfare in general.

Tips & Resources

- *Communications Toolkit: A Guide to Navigating Communications for the Nonprofit World*: available from causecommunications.org/clients-cause.php

Part III: Know the Facts

“Life affords no higher pleasure than that of surmounting difficulties, passing from one step of success to another, forming new wishes and seeing them gratified.”

—Dr. Samuel Johnson

Facts about Cat & Dog Overpopulation

- “No homes for littermates” is one of the top 10 reasons people relinquish their cats and dogs to shelters.²
- The top reason both cat and dog guardians give for not having their pet altered is that they simply have not bothered to do it yet.³
- Twenty percent of cat guardians think their cat is too young to be altered, and 18% say they are not able to afford spay/neuter surgery.³
- Twenty-one percent of dog guardians want to breed their dog, and 13% think their dog is too young to be altered.³
- An estimated three to four million cats and dogs are euthanized in shelters each year.¹ That’s one every eight seconds.
- Tens of millions⁴ of stray and feral cats struggle to survive on their own outdoors. Although some are altered and live in managed colonies, most are not altered and receive no health care. They reproduce at will and many suffer from illness or injury before dying.⁵
- Over half (56%) of dog guardians and nearly two-thirds (63%) of cat guardians rank pet overpopulation as the most important pet issue.³
- In a study of relinquishment of cats and dogs in 12 U.S. animal shelters, 30% of the surrendered dogs were purebreds.⁶
- The same study indicated that 55% of the surrendered dogs and 47% of the surrendered cats were unaltered.⁶
- It costs U.S. taxpayers an estimated \$2 billion each year to round up, house, euthanize, and dispose of homeless animals.⁷
- Over 56% of dogs and puppies entering shelters are euthanized, based on reports from over 1,055 facilities across America.⁸
- Approximately 71% of cats and kittens entering shelters are euthanized, based on reports from 1,055 facilities across America.⁸

1 *HSUS Pet Overpopulation Estimates.*
www.hsus.org/pets/issues_affecting_our_pets/pet_overpopulation_and_ownership_statistics/hsus_pet_overpopulation_estimates.html

2 National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy—*The Top Ten Reasons for Pet Relinquishment to Shelters in the United States.* www.petpopulation.org/topten.html

3 *The State of the American Pet—A Study Among Pet Owners.* Prepared by Yankelovich Partners for Ralston Purina, October 2000. www.purina.ca/images/articles/pdf/TheStateofThe.pdf

4 Alley Cat Allies. www.alleycat.org

5 Alley Cat Rescue. www.saveacat.org

6 *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 1998, Volume 1, Number 3, p. 213

7 *USA Today*, June 23, 1998, pg. 1

8 National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy—*Shelter Statistics Survey (1997 data).*
www.petpopulation.org/statsurvey.html

Q: What is spaying and neutering?

Spaying and neutering, the most common surgical procedures performed on animals, stop animals from being able to reproduce. Females are spayed, and males are neutered (although sometimes the word “neuter” is used to refer to an animal of unknown sex, or to a group of animals of mixed or unknown sex).

The clinical name for “spay” is ovariectomy. When a female is spayed, her ovaries and uterus are removed. The clinical name for “neuter” is orchidectomy. When a male is neutered, his testicles are removed.

Q: Isn't spaying and neutering unnatural?

Euthanizing healthy, adoptable companion animals is unnatural. Currently, we euthanize one kitten, cat, puppy, or dog about every 8 seconds due to a critical lack of resources, including loving, lifetime homes. Spay/neuter is a humane, proven solution to this tragic human failure.

Q: Doesn't spaying and neutering hurt?

Veterinarians provide animals with a general anesthetic, so the surgery itself is painless. Any discomfort an animal experiences afterward is minimal, and can be alleviated with medication given to you by your vet. According to VetCentric.com, “most cats will heal very easily and quickly,” and “most dogs show no signs of discomfort from the procedure.” In fact, some animals “may attempt to resume their normal level of activity immediately after surgery.” This, of course, should be monitored to ensure that the animal does not aggravate the incision. Most animals return to normal activity within 24 to 72 hours after surgery.

Q: Does spaying or neutering provide any additional benefits?

Yes. Spaying greatly reduces the risk of breast cancer and prevents various reproductive tract disorders. Neutering often resolves undesirable behaviors such as aggression, spraying, and roaming, and eliminates the risk of various testicular diseases. Generally, animals who have been spayed or neutered prove to be more sociable companions.

Q: Doesn't spaying or neutering make dogs less protective?

No. Any changes brought about by spaying or neutering are generally positive. Neutered males tend to fight less and are less likely to become lost due to straying from home in search of a mate. Spayed females do not go into heat or need to be confined indoors to avoid pregnancy. Dogs do not become less protective or loyal to their guardians as a result of being spayed or neutered.

Q: Is it really necessary to neuter males? Males don't give birth!

The old saying “it takes two to tango” is as true for animals as it is for humans. Even if you are very careful to keep your male pet under control at all times, accidents do happen and he may escape. In fact, he will likely try repeatedly to escape, digging up your yard, scratching up your door, or chewing off his restraint in the process. Males roaming in search of a mate are susceptible to being injured by traffic and in fights with other males. And while a female cat or dog can only have one litter at a time, male animals can impregnate many females each day.

Q: When should I have my pet spayed or neutered?

As early as possible! Although cats and dogs have traditionally been altered at six months, many veterinarians are now practicing pediatric (also known as “early age,” “prepubertal,” or “juvenile”) spay/neuter surgery, which can be performed on animals who weigh at least two pounds—typically at six to eight weeks of age. Doctors practicing this technique report that the surgery is significantly easier and quicker to perform; guardians who have had pediatric spay/neuter performed on their animals report fewer medical problems than those who have older animals altered; and spaying or neutering homeless animals before adopting them out is the best way to prevent accidental births. If your veterinarian would like more information on pediatric spay/neuter, please refer her or him to the list of resources on page 28.

Q: Isn't spaying and neutering expensive?

Although to some animal guardians the cost of surgery may seem high initially, it's a real bargain when compared with the cost of raising a litter of puppies or kittens. Spaying and neutering also saves tax dollars. A 1999 survey of 186 shelters revealed an average cost of \$176 to handle each homeless animal²—a cost that ultimately comes out of all our pockets. Most important of all, when you consider the moral expense of euthanizing millions of healthy, innocent beings whom many of us consider “best friends,” the cost of spay/neuter surgery fades to insignificance.

While prices for spay/neuter surgery vary considerably, many humane societies, welfare organizations, and municipal animal care and control departments will spay/neuter animals at low costs for people who truly need them—those struggling to make ends meet on a low income, animal rescue workers such as those who trap and neuter feral cats, and Good Samaritans who are paying for someone else's animal(s). Friends of Animals, for example, distributes low cost spay/neuter vouchers through its national toll-free hotline: 1-800-321-PETS (1-800-321-7387). Other resources are listed here: Humanesociety.org/spayday

You can also start a low cost spay/neuter program in your community. The resources listed on pages 28-29 provide all the information you need to get started.

The bottom line is this: when you bring an animal into your family, you assume responsibility for that animal's wellbeing. Spaying or neutering is as vital to your pet's health and happiness as routine physical examinations, good nutrition, grooming, playtime, and love. Before you adopt an animal, you need to seriously consider whether or not you are ready to take on the financial responsibility of properly caring for one. If you have already adopted an unaltered animal, it is your responsibility to have that animal spayed or neutered regardless of cost.

Q: I've been feeding a group of stray or feral cats, and they are reproducing. What should I do?

It is important to humanely trap the cats and have them spayed or neutered as soon as possible. Please refer to the list of feral, stray, and domestic cat resources on page 28. The organizations listed here can provide step-by-step instruction and expert guidance to ensure your Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR) effort is a rewarding success.

Q: Are there any special considerations to take into account when having animal companions other than cats and dogs spayed or neutered?

Yes. It is vital that rabbit, ferret, guinea pig, and rodent spay/neuters be performed by veterinarians who have experience with operating on these particular animals. Please refer to the list of resources on page 29.

- Have kids play Spay Now! Created by two pre-teen girls, Spay Now! is a free online game that teaches kids about the importance of spay/neuter in a fun way. Available here: www.nchumane.org/games/spaynow/index.html

References

¹*The State of the American Pet—A Study Among Pet Owners*. Prepared by Yankelovich Partners for Ralston-Purina, October 2000. www.purina.ca/images/articles/pdf/TheStateofThe.pdf

²Wenstrup, John, and Alexis Dowidchuk, “Pet Overpopulation: Data and Measurement Issues in Shelters,” *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 2(4), 1999, 303-319.

According to a recent survey¹, almost one quarter of America's animal guardians have not spayed or neutered their pets. Why not?

- “Haven't bothered to do it yet.” (29%) Spay Day USA is the perfect motivator!
- “My pet is too young.” (15%) Maybe not. Animals weighing as little as two pounds may be spayed or neutered.
- “I can't afford it.” (9%) There are programs available to help. Visit humanesociety.org/spayday
- “It's cruel.” (5%) / “It's unnatural.” (4%) Spay/neuter is a humane, effective alternative to the unnatural euthanizing of healthy, adoptable pets.

Additional Resources

Use this information to connect with people and publications that can increase your Spay Day USA effectiveness!

Feral (Untamed) and Stray Cats

Neighborhood Cats

Based in New York City, Neighborhood Cats provides model Trap-Neuter-Return projects and offers workshops for feral cat colony caretakers.

Neighborhood Cats, Inc.
2576 Broadway, #555
New York, NY 10025
Phone: (212) 662-5761
E-mail: headcat@neighborhoodcats.org
Website: www.neighborhoodcats.org

General

National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy (NCPSP)

The NCPSP gathers and analyzes reliable data that further characterize the number, origin, and disposition of cats and dogs in the United States and recommends programs to reduce the surplus.

Sally Fekety Bolgos, Public Information Consultant
National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy
P. O. Box 131488
Ann Arbor, MI 48113-1488
E-mail: ncppsp@aol.com
Website: www.petpopulation.org

SPAY/USA

(Not affiliated with Spay Day USA)

SPAY/USA is a nationwide network and referral service for pet owners who cannot afford the regular cost of spay/neuter in their areas. In addition, SPAY/USA offers "A Guidebook to Mobile Spay/Neuter Clinics" and other information on pet overpopulation.

SPAY/USA
2261 Broadbridge Ave.
Stratford, CT 06614
Phone: (203) 377 1116
E-mail: CGalog@snet.net
Website: www.spayusa.org

Other Companion Animals

House Rabbit Society's Spaying and Neutering FAQ's

Spay/neuter facts from the rabbit experts.

Website: www.rabbit.org/faq/sections/spay-neuter.html

How to Find a Good Guinea Pig Vet

Website: www.cavyinfo.com/html/vet.htm

San Francisco's Small Animal Adoption and Spay/Neuter Program

Read all about it in the Spring 2002 issue of DDAL/DDAF's member magazine, the Animal Guardian.

The Rat Fan Club

Visit the Health Care section of the Rat Fan Club's "Helpful Info" Web page to locate veterinarians in your state who specialize in rats.

Website: www.ratfanclub.org/helpinfo.html

The Spay and Neuter Page—It's Not Just for Dogs and Cats Anymore

Everything you need to know about spaying or neutering rabbits and ferrets.

Website: www.spayandneuter.50megs.com

Pediatric Spay/Neuter

Early-Age Neutering: A Practical Guide for Veterinarians

A 19-minute videotape co-produced by the University of California, Davis, School of Veterinary Medicine and the Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights (AVAR). Instructs veterinarians who haven't performed surgery on younger animals about surgical technique, anesthesia, and the benefits of pre-pubertal surgery.

\$20 total for U.S. residents; \$23 for non-U.S. residents. Make check or money order out to "AVAR" and send to:

AVAR
P. O. Box 208
Davis, CA 95617-0208

Visit: www.avar.org/resources_sterilization.asp

Project Spay/Neuter, Inc.

Dr. Tracy Land has performed over 12,000 pediatric spay/neuters with 0.006% mortality. She is happy to talk to any veterinarian who has questions about this procedure. Contact:

Dr. Tracy Land
Project Spay/Neuter, Inc.
4630 Martin Rd,
Cumming, GA 30041
Phone: (770) 887-1565 • Fax: (770) 781-4237
E-mail: tland@tracylanddvm.com
Website: www.projectspayneuter.com

Statistics: Overpopulation & Ownership

HSUS Pet Overpopulation Estimates

Website:

http://www.hsus.org/pets/issues_affecting_our_pets/pet_overpopulation_and_ownership_statistics/hsus_pet_overpopulation_estimates.html

The Humane Society of the United States
Spay Day USA
2100 L St., NW
Washington, DC 20037
(202) 452-1100
humanesociety.org/spayday