



Alley Cat Allies opposes the implementation of Mandatory Spay/Neuter Laws¹ for the following reasons.

1. Lack of Affordable, Convenient Spay/Neuter Facilities

It is impossible for ordinary citizens to comply with such laws. There are more than 90 million owned cats in the United States today.² This figure does not include stray and feral cats, which are estimated at 50-60 million. As a nation, we do not have veterinary facilities adequate to sterilize our population of cats, whether they are owned, stray, or feral. Most of America's 50 largest cities do not have high-volume spay/neuter clinics. Smaller communities, whether suburban or rural, are even less likely to have affordable and accessible spay/neuter facilities.

Alley Cat Allies recognizes, and statistics indicate, that most people will sterilize their cats (indoor and outdoor) if they have the means to do so. However, veterinary services in many, if not most, areas of the country are prohibitively expensive for working families. Low-cost spay/neuter is either not available at all or is not readily accessible to the majority of low to middle-income residents. Unless adequate, affordable spay/neuter services are in place and available to everyone, a mandatory sterilization law is not enforceable, punishes otherwise law-abiding people who have no alternative, and exacerbates an already difficult situation by driving a segment of the population (outdoor cat caregivers) into secrecy.

2. Targeting the Wrong People

Communities do not have the budget or manpower resources to uniformly and effectively enforce mandatory spay/neuter laws. Short of conducting door-to-door inspections, those responsible for enforcing the law are unlikely to discover irresponsible pet owners (people who will not pay for or do not want to sterilize). But lacking facilities to sterilize feral cats, communities with these laws disproportionately target and punish responsible feral/stray cat caregivers when outdoor cats are picked up by animal control, determined to be intact and "unadoptable," and destroyed either as policy or to make space for "adoptable" animals.

Mandatory spay/neuter laws in communities without affordable, accessible sterilization facilities also have a disproportionately severe impact on low-income residents who are the least likely to have financial resources to either pay for sterilization or pay penalties for not getting their pet(s) sterilized. Again, widespread resources do not yet exist, especially for the working class.

¹ Mandatory Spay Neuter Laws in this context imply the enforcement of a law stating that every animal in the jurisdiction be sterilized else the "owner" be penalized. This definition does not include laws that enforce a law stating that all shelters or other adoption outlets sterilize before adoption only. Alley Cat Allies endorses sterilization before adoption wholly.

² APPMA's 2005/2006 National Pet Owners Survey
http://www.appma.org/press_industrytrends.asp.

The resources a community would have to dedicate to enforcing mandatory spay/neuter laws would be far better spent in making spay/neuter facilities available to residents and educating them about the importance and availability of sterilization.

3. Increased Killing in Shelters

When a law governing the ownership or care of animals is enacted 1) without adequate resources for the populace to comply, but which 2) has costly penalties and 3) is widely enforced, it can cause people to relinquish their pets to a shelter or to abandon them elsewhere. When more animals enter shelters, the kill rate goes up. When cats are abandoned outdoors, they add to and compound the feral cat issue.