

MYTH: The Crisis of Pet Overpopulation

Three to four million dogs and cats in shelters are euthanized because there are not enough homes for them. Too many companion animals competing for too few good homes is the most obvious consequence of uncontrolled breeding. (Source: HSUS website)

FACT

In State of the Animals 2001 HSUS stated: There was, however, general consensus among most animal related organizations that the term pet overpopulation was not only difficult to define, but that it was also probably no longer an accurate catchphrase to describe the reasons for animals leaving their original homes, especially for dogs."

Uncontrolled breeding is no longer the primary reason dogs and cats end up in shelters, and has been replaced with a pet retention problem. A 1991 study from Tufts found that 87.8% of female dogs were spayed and 91.5% of female cats were spayed.

The most recent surveys by the National Council on Pet Population Study & Policy (NCPSP) identified the top reasons for relinquishment common to both dogs and cats are: moving, landlord issues, cost of pet maintenance, inadequate facilities, no time, and personal problems.

According to NCPSP it is quite clear that many pet owners lack the knowledge to solve problems with their pets. Animals, which otherwise might remain happily in their home are relinquished to shelters across the country. [Exploring the Surplus Cat and Dog Problem. Highlights of Five Research Publications Regarding Relinquishment of Pets](#)



Our Board of Directors consists of animal professionals who own, show and/or responsibly breed dogs, cats, horses, birds, rabbits, livestock, and reptiles.

We educate the public about being a responsible owner, making the correct choice of a pet for their needs and lifestyle; having realistic expectations of the behavior and level of care required; finding resources for training to achieve a happy, healthy relationship with their pet.

We support the human-animal bond, and help pet owners enjoy having pets be part of their lives.

We educate professionals and the public on the difference between animal welfare and animal rights.

We develop educational materials for citizens, schools, veterinarians, pet supply stores, animal shelters, libraries, and training centers.

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Myth Busters!



Facts Behind Animal Rights Propaganda

A public service message from
North Carolina Responsible Animal
Owners Alliance (NCRAOA)

MYTH:

Breeders Kill Shelter Animals Every puppy or kitten born costs a shelter animal its life. *(Multiple Sources including Best Friends Forum, Pet Finders Forums, and PETA)*

FACT

This statement has many variations, such as “breeders kill shelter animals” and “don’t breed don’t buy while shelter animals die”.

The purpose of the statement is to vilify breeders and to instill guilt in anyone who prefers to buy from a breeder rather than adopt from a shelter. While purchasing a surrendered dog or cat from a shelter is worthy, it might not be the best route for everyone. Plenty of shelter animals are happy and trainable, but there are also some that come with ‘baggage’ and need either an experienced or a determined owner. Purebred dogs and cats have specific and predictable traits. Knowing these and selecting the right match can be a better fit.

According to Gary Patronek VMD, PhD - Center for Animals and Public Policy at Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine - the reluctance to shift from an emphasis on alleged overpopulation to a multi-faceted strategy to prevent shelter euthanasia is based on several factors, including:

- Regional imbalances in puppy numbers. Some areas of the country import puppies to meet the demand, others do have a surplus;
- An inability to abandon the idea that the breeding of a puppy that was wanted is somehow linked with the death of that dog in a shelter when it became unwanted;
- A lack of recognition that dog and cat problems are different, and a tendency to equate the huge number of unwanted kittens with a dwindling number of unwanted puppies;
- Deeply held beliefs that breeding is wrong.

MYTH:

Mixed-breed dogs are healthier. They aren’t as likely to have inherited problems. *(Multiple Sources)*

FACT

Dog breeds were created, selected and bred to perform specific functions. Selecting desirable traits and eliminating others, breeders created their ideal appearance and behavior. Isn’t it therefore logical that mixed-breeds resulting from purebred crosses carry the same faults and virtues, and to some degree the same inherited disorders?

All animals carry genetic defects. All genetic departures from health are not equal, and all are not life threatening

George Padgett, DVM, a leading canine geneticist, lists genetic diseases in his book, Control of Canine Genetic Diseases published by Howell Book House, 1998, ISBN: 0-87605-004-6. Appendix 1 of the book "Genetic Disease Predisposition by Breed, (page 189)" provides some interesting information regarding mixed breeds vs. purebreds.

There are 532 genetic diseases listed in the book, which are spread out among fifteen diagnostic categories. There is however some difficulty in differentiating diseases with more than one mode of inheritance. The number of diseases per breed varies strikingly

Quoting from the text regarding instances of genetic diseases:

"The largest number of dogs in the United States consists of those of mixed breeding (mutts, curs, crossbreeds and so on), and as would be expected since they contain mixtures of most, if not all, breeds, they have far and away the most diseases. These dogs are reported to have 220 diseases."

MYTH:

One cat and its offspring can produce 420,000 cats in seven years
(source: PETA and multiple humane society websites)

FACT

After a six-year study and daily observation of a feral cat colony, it has been documented that stray female cats start cycling when they are 4 - 6.9 months old, or as soon as the days are long enough. January and February are the start of the kitten season, with the litters born in March and April. These cats have an average of 2.1 litters per year of 4.25 kittens.

Forty-two percent of the kittens will die by the age of two months of natural causes. Many more will end up at the shelter. Those who escape early death and the shelter go on to be prolific bearers of kittens over their short life span of approximately three years.

Taking the mortality into account, along with birth and death rates, the average stray female will have 5.25 litters in her lifetime, encompassing 22.3 kittens. At age two months there should be 12.9 survivors, roughly six females and seven males (at maturity, roughly 2/3 of the stray cat population is male, due to the high mortality of females during first pregnancy and birth), which will decrease to four females over time. These six females will go on to have their 22 surviving kittens each.

Realistically, over 12 years one unspayed female with all her unspayed female offspring can reasonably be expected to be responsible for over 3200 kittens if there is no human intervention. cfa.org/articles/trap-alter-release.htm

More Myth Busters are available on the NCRAOA website: www.ncraoa.com