



September, 2011

Davidson County Commissioner Resurrects MSN

At the request of Davidson County Commissioner Fred McClure, the 2006 proposal for mandatory spay neuter is back under consideration. Former members of the 2006 committee who considered the ordinance agreed to reconvene. McClure is joined by Davidson County Sheriff David Grice, Davidson County Health Director Layton Long, Debbie Harris with the Davidson County Attorney's Office, Mark Hamrick, a veterinarian with Lexington Large Animal Medicine & Surgery, Mary Cullop with the Davidson County Humane Society, Art Burkhart, an animal rights activist with emphasis on animal rescue. This year's committee will also include a hunter, Robert Stone.

The board voted 4-3 Aug. 23 to recall the committee with commissioners Billy Joe Kepley, Larry Potts and Sam Watford voting against the proposal.

The ordinance calls for spay neuter of dogs and cats over 6 months old unless the owner purchases a \$100 permit. Violators would be fined unless they sterilize their cat or dog within 60 days.

McClure believes MSN will decrease intake at the county animal shelter and claims studies prove the effectiveness of forced spay neuter.

Commissioner Potts, who opposes the ordinance, pointed to data and an article from the North Carolina Responsible Animal Owners Alliance on Buncombe County's ordinance that demonstrates only a 21 percent reduction in euthanasia rates in the county over a seven-year period from 2001 to 2008. Reported intake in 2001 was 9,325 (animals) and reported intake in 2008 was 7,312 (animals).

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Mandatory Spay Neuter – a Bad Idea

Despite the fact Mandatory Spay Neuter (MSN) is a failed concept, advocates in numerous states continue to stir public opinion and press for ordinance changes.

Why is MSN a bad idea? To begin with MSN targets the wrong people – people who are already responsible and wish to breed dogs/cats – even if so-called exemptions are included in the legislation. MSN is a blanket law built on the false premise that reducing the source of animals equals reducing shelter intake.

There are no stories of success anywhere that MSN has been enacted. In fact, many municipalities have seen their intake and euthanasia rates increase following passage of such laws. In the early '90's when Fort Wayne, Indiana; San Mateo, California; and King County, Washington passed their animal control legislation, the punitive laws were hailed as a national model; however, they remain a dismal failure to this day.

Nathan Winograd, author of *Redemption*, notes in one of his many essays that if coercive legislation was effective then Long Beach CA, where MSN was carried to the extreme of a total breeding ban for 30 years, would have empty shelters or at least be No Kill. Yet Long Beach still handles thousands of animals thru animal control services every year.

Most professionals acknowledge benefits to spay/neuter of dogs such as decreased roaming, decreased risk of mammary, testicular and ovarian cancer, and population control in nonbreeding animals. However, it is imperative to note the disadvantages of spaying or neutering may include diabetes, osteosarcoma, hemangiosarcoma, prostatic adenocarcinoma, transitional cell carcinoma, urinary tract infections, urinary incontinence, autoimmune thyroiditis, hypothyroidism and hip dysplasia.

MSN ordinances do not consider the physiological differences between dogs and cats. The cats' reproductive physiology requires that they either be bred or spayed to remain healthy. An ill conceived mandatory spay/neuter regulation could force a small cat hobbyist out of existence causing irreplaceable loss of genetic diversity and conceivably the extinction of entire breeds.

Mandatory spay/neuter ordinances are intended to deter and penalize pet owners. No matter how severe the punishment, free-roaming cats with no owners will continue to reproduce on the streets adding to the feral cat population. MSN laws have no impact on the unchecked reproduction of unowned/free-roaming/feral cats - the greatest reason for shelter euthanasia. Spay/neuter must remain a decision between the veterinarian and owner and not a government mandate.

MSN and breeder licensing laws also fail to address the problem of pet retention. It is undisputable that the number one reason for owner surrender is related to pet behavior or health problems, or the owner's lack of time, knowledge or ability to care for the pet.

The emphasis must be placed on pet retention if animal control and shelter intake is to be lowered. Pets that have been relinquished had an owner who chose not to keep them.

Passing breeding restrictions costs the public money in the form of administrative fees, burdens animal control to enforce an unpopular law, and takes focus away from needed duties dealing with strays, abandoned animals, cruelty cases, public education, and shelter adoptions.

Breeding restriction laws would limit the options of dog buyers. Options are important to prospective dog owners because it is important for them to choose dogs that will fit in well with their lifestyles in terms of size, grooming requirements, and exercise needs. The fewer choices available to potential owners, the greater the chance that the new dogs will not fit in well with their lifestyles and expectations.

Restricting breeders of purebred dogs will not make mixed breeds from the shelter more appealing to everyone no matter how politically correct shelter adoptions are marketed to be. An elderly woman living in an apartment looking for a small lap dog, is not going to adopt an 80 pound collie/shepherd mix from the shelter if local breeders are shut down by mandatory spay/neuter laws or excessive breeder permitting.

Fish Oil Supplementation in Cats

[Park HJ, Park JS, Hayek MG et al: Dietary fish oil and flaxseed oil suppress inflammation and immunity in cats, Vet Immunol Immunopathol 141:301, 2011.](#)

Fish and flaxseed oil have become popular dietary supplements, and are an excellent source of n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA). These fatty acids can modulate the immune response, and have been used to modulate the inflammation associated with canine skin conditions. The immunomodulatory and anti-inflammatory effects in cats are unknown. This study investigates the responses in cats to fish or flaxseed oil. Fourteen female adult cats were fed diets supplemented with fish oil or flaxseed oil, or a control diet with relatively low levels of PUFA, and their immune response was checked periodically. Decreased inflammation (in response to a histamine response test) was seen in cats fed the supplemented diets. Fish oil appeared to be more effective in reducing inflammation than flaxseed oil. These supplements may be useful in managing inflammatory conditions in cats, such as allergies. [MK]

Related articles: [Leemans J, Cambier C, Chandler T et al: Prophylactic effects of omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids and luteolin on airway hyperresponsiveness and inflammation in cats with experimentally-induced asthma, Veterinary journal 184:111, 2010.](#)

Treatments for Feline Urine Spraying

[Mills DS, Redgate SE, Landsberg GM. A meta-analysis of studies of treatments for feline urine spraying. PLoS ONE 2011;6:18448.](#)

Urine spraying by cats is a common behavioral problem reported by cat owners. Currently, there is no consensus among professionals for treatment of this problem. This study attempted to analyze current data to identify the most appropriate treatment. Ten studies evaluating either medications or pheromones as tools for correcting this behavior were included. Cessation or reduction of urine spraying was observed in 90% of cats receiving intervention regardless of method compared to a placebo. The sustained use of fluoxetine had the largest reported effect. The authors noted that the sample size was small in these studies, and that validation through larger studies is needed. Pheromones were also found to reduce the incidence of spraying. The authors concluded that there is good evidence that medications and pheromones provide added value for the reduction of urine spraying in cats. [MK] > [Free, full text article](#)

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3078130/?tool=pubmed>

New Canine and Feline Preventive Healthcare Guidelines

SCHAUMBURG, Ill., Sept. 1, 2011 -- The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) today announced the publication of new health guidelines for dogs and cats. The guidelines were developed in response to startling statistics that indicate visits to veterinarians are declining while preventable diseases in pets are increasing. The guidelines are designed to provide the foundation for the veterinary practice team to promote preventive veterinary medicine.

Recent market research has identified several reasons for the decrease in use of veterinary services. These include proliferation of self-help pet care by owners who search for pet health information by use of the Internet instead of relying on a veterinarian. Also cited were the difficulties associated with transporting cats to the veterinary clinic and resistance to examination or treatment. Most importantly, current data indicate that inadequate understanding by pet owners of the need for routine examination of their pets is a key client-driven factor for the declining use of veterinary services. By providing a blueprint for preventive healthcare, the new Canine and Feline Preventive Healthcare Guidelines directly address the lack of understanding by the pet-owning public of the critical relationship between regular health evaluations and the well-being of their pets.

Other realities of veterinary practice underscore the need for clinical guidelines that actively encourage routine preventive care. Poor client compliance with veterinarians' healthcare recommendations is well-known and broadly undercuts the benefits of interventions such as heartworm testing, dental care, feeding therapeutic diets, senior pet health screenings, and vaccination. The impact of sporadic use of preventive pet healthcare may also be a contributing factor to the increase in the prevalence of some common preventable canine and feline diseases that has recently been reported. These include diabetes mellitus, dental disease, parasitism, and otitis externa. It has been shown that early diagnosis and treatment, the principal benefits of regular examinations, can dramatically slow progression of such conditions as renal disease, osteoarthritis, and periodontal disease. Disease-sparing outcomes as a result of early intervention can best be achieved by regular clinic visits to diagnose disease and monitor the effects of treatment.

It is noteworthy that many pet owners, especially cat owners, associate veterinary care primarily with vaccinations and treatment of overt disease. Few clients fully appreciate the critical role of preventive care in maintaining a long, rewarding relationship with their pets. This is a clear signal that veterinarians need to do a better job of convincing their clients that regular clinic visits are more important for ensuring lifetime pet wellness than occasional visits solely for vaccination or treatment of acute disease. The new guidelines provide a reference for this type of veterinarian-client dialogue.

The most important contribution of the new Canine and Feline Preventive Healthcare Guidelines may be their potential to enable pet owners to better understand the value of preventive veterinary care. Pet owners who realize that preventive care preserves their relationship with their pets are much more likely to become regular users of veterinary medical services, regardless of economic conditions. Instead of visiting a veterinarian only occasionally or as a secondary or final recourse, dog and cat owners who subscribe to the concept of preventive healthcare become regular users of veterinary services throughout their pets' lifetime. By translating evidence-based medicine into actionable best practices, the new guidelines specify how companion animal medicine can be applied well beyond vaccinations and acute care, the narrow perspective held by many pet owners today. The guidelines can also function as templates for pet owner education, providing a complete pet healthcare agenda for veterinarians to discuss with their clients. The net result will be a reduction in the prevalence and impact of the chronic diseases that shorten and detract from the lives of pets that do not receive regular preventive care. That is an outcome that all partners in the veterinarian-client-pet relationship can embrace. *Source: AVMA Journals September 1, 2011, Vol. 239, No. 5, Pages 625-629*

Why Do You Want A Dog?

Everyone knows that all registered dogs, like all registered vehicles, are not of equal quality. Locating an ethical, responsible breeder requires some effort. The AKC Breeder Referral Network is accessible through www.akc.org; the United Kennel Club www.ukc.dogs.com; the American Rare Breed Association is www.arba.org. Selecting a breed that suits your lifestyle requires homework and preparation. One book on this subject is *The Right Dog for You* by D.F. Tortora, Ph.D., 1980.

Before considering how to select an individual dog, how to evaluate a litter of puppies or determine health and stability in a grown dog, it is necessary to look much closer to home. Why do you want a dog? What do you expect? What do you have to offer?

Perhaps the worst reason to get a dog is the idea of breeding and selling puppies to make a few dollars. Puppies really are not a cash crop. Another irresponsible reason to get a dog is the idea of a "surprise present" or Christmas puppy. The hectic turmoil of holidays cannot provide the quiet, scheduled environment a baby puppy needs and deserves. Persons breeding litters for holiday profit generally do not have the breeds' or individual puppies' best interests in mind. Any gift that cannot be returned, one that requires emotional and financial upkeep, can simply become an unwelcome burden.

Parents sometimes think a puppy is an ideal living toy, a way for the children to learn responsibility. If you have a child under six, please consider a grown dog known to be reliable with small children. Adding a puppy to a home with tiny children is simply adding another baby. In six months, the dog has reached adult size; the children remain small. Usually, no one has had a moment to train the dog who just might fear or avoid all the confusion and the kids. Another ad goes in the paper -- free to good home.

When the dog cannot be kept, the children learn from the situation. They might learn that companion animals are just another disposable commodity. They might feel that mom and dad can't cope or are somehow dishonest -- after all, wasn't this supposed to be the dog for the kids? Consider carefully what you might really be teaching children before you acquire any animal.

If you've decided you want to get a dog as a weapon, for protection, first ask yourself just exactly what it is that you fear. Many folks chain or fence an impressive dog in the back yard. What burglar wants to steal the grass or shrubs when he can enter the house easily after befriending or poisoning old Spike? Remember, some attack trained dogs can be unreliable, while any alert house dog can create enough racket to ward off intruders or warn occupants.

Some want to acquire a dog for personal satisfaction. They have seen appealing photos of dogs and puppies at their local shelter. Trust your animal shelter's advice when you consider adopting. It may be admirable to save a mentally deranged or physically incapacitated animal that no one else wants, but your best intentions may only last days or months and can actually prolong a dog's physical or mental anguish. That healthy animal you do not take home, because "someone else surely will," may not be adopted -- ever.

Those who think of dogs as companions and family members have only to run through a basic check list. Do you have the patience to research breeds and breeders? Or perhaps you have the ability to select from the many at the shelter? Do you have the time and knowledge to train? Do you have the money for purchase, veterinary care, proper containment, food and housing? In short, do you have what it takes to receive ten to fifteen years of unconditional love? If so, welcome to the dog house!

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The Age-Old Fight Against Antibiotics

Researchers find antibiotic resistance genes in 30,000-year-old bacteria, suggesting such resistance is not a modern phenomenon.

Although humans have been using antibiotics for only the past 60 years, antibiotic resistance genes have been around for thousands, maybe even millions, of years. In a new study published online in *Nature* today (August 31), researchers report finding genes encoding resistance to commonly used antibiotics such as penicillin, tetracycline, and vancomycin in 30,000 year-old bacterial samples from the Canadian permafrost.

Microbiologists have long suspected that antibiotic resistance genes have existed for much longer than antibiotics have been in use—perhaps even as long as microbes have been around—but “the data had not been there,” said Stuart Levy, a professor of microbiology at Tufts University School of Medicine who was not involved with the study. “This really is a solid piece of paper that shows that antibiotic resistant genes, which resemble those we have now, existed 30,000 years ago.”

The problem of antibiotic resistance first became evident shortly after the introduction of penicillin—the first mass-produced antibiotic—during World War II. As early as the late 1940s, physicians started encountering patients harboring pathogenic bacteria that seemed to have spontaneously acquired the ability to resist the drug. In the decades since, many “superbugs” resistant to multiple types of antibiotics, such as Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), have popped up, plaguing hospitals and claiming thousands of lives.

In these pathogenic bacteria, the emergence of antibiotic resistance seemed to be tied to the widespread use of antibiotics in humans and in agriculture, said study author Gerry Wright, a biochemist who researches antibiotic resistance at McMaster University. But this is not the case with environmental bacteria, such as those living in the soils and in aquatic environments. When Wright carried out an extensive survey of antibiotic resistance in soil microbes in 2006, he found that for environmental bacteria, antibiotic resistance is the norm.

To see how far back he could find these resistance genes out in the environment, Wright and his team dug out cores of ice from the permafrost in Bear Creek in Yukon, Canada. Because the frozen soil has not thawed in tens of thousands of years, there has been no mixing of surface and subsurface bacteria. With the help of ancient DNA expert at McMaster University in Canada, Hendrik Poinar, the team extracted the DNA from the icy samples dating back 30 millennia and probed them for known antibiotic resistance genes.

The genes were “just as effective 30,000 years ago and they look just like the ones that exist now,” Wright said. “That tells us that resistance is old and pervasive in the environment.” *Full story at The Scientist*

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