

# *Animal Control Management*

A GUIDE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

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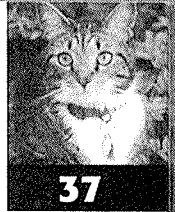
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Program (SNAP) in Bernalillo County, New Mexico, is typical: for low-income pet owners, the county arranges with six participating veterinarians to cover most of the cost of having a pet sterilized.

Some jurisdictions offer subsidized sterilization programs that are open to all residents regardless of income level, reasoning that a financial discount provides an incentive to pet owners who can afford the procedures but would not have them done otherwise. However, two recent analyses point to the need for subsidized programs that target low-income areas. A study of California shelter euthanasia rates in 1995 found that the numbers of dogs and cats euthanized were almost three times greater in the state's poorest counties (10.14 percent of the total estimated household dog and cat population in those counties) than in the richest counties (3.39 percent).<sup>3</sup> An analysis of New Jersey data from 1998 found a similarly strong correlation between poverty rates and euthanasia rates: the poorest quartile of counties had a shelter euthanasia rate of 10.8 dogs and cats per 1,000 people; the richest quartile had a euthanasia rate of 2.9 per 1,000 people.<sup>4</sup>

## Impact of Subsidized Programs

### State Programs

Although it is difficult to measure the direct impact of subsidized spay/neuter programs, jurisdictions that have invested in such programs have witnessed a stabilization or actual decline in the numbers of animals impounded by local shelters.

Two states, New Hampshire and New Jersey, have accumulated data on spay/neuter programs over a period of years. New Hampshire launched a statewide spay/neuter assistance program in 1994. Funded by dog registration fees, the program enables pet owners on public assistance to have their animals sterilized for \$10. Those who adopt their pets from shelters can have them sterilized for \$25. Veterinarians participating in the program are reimbursed for 80 percent of their regular fees. Through 2000, more than 25,000 animals had been sterilized through the program (see Table 4-1).

In the six years since the program's inception, the state's eight largest shelters admitted 30,985 fewer dogs and cats than in the six years preceding the program (see Table 4-2). (New Hampshire's eight largest shelters account for 95 percent of the animals admitted statewide.) Estimated savings on impounding and sheltering those animals was \$3.2 million, based on a per-animal sheltering cost estimate of \$105. The cost of the program was just over \$1 million, meaning that the state saved more than \$2.2 million in the program's first six years. Thus New Hampshire taxpayers saved about \$3.23 for every dollar the state spent on the subsidized sterilization program.

**Table 4-1 New Hampshire Animal Population Control Program, Surgeries and Costs**

Fiscal Year	Surgeries Performed	Cost
1995	3,384	\$122,114
1996	3,526	\$126,899
1997	4,006	\$155,404
1998	4,715	\$183,410
1999	5,196	\$210,998
2000	4,664	\$209,199
2001	4,055*	\$224,199
Totals	29,546	\$1,232,223
Veterinarian contribution via reduced fees (approx.)		\$250,000

\* Incomplete

Source: New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food.

**Table 4-2 Effect of 1994 Animal Population Control Program in New Hampshire, 1988–2000**

Year	Dogs admitted to shelters <sup>a</sup>	Cats admitted to shelters <sup>a</sup>	Total dogs and cats impounded	Euthanasia rate (per 1,000 human residents)
1988	7,337	13,822	21,159	9.5
1989	8,150	13,562	21,712	10.7
1990	7,601	13,396	20,997	10.9
1991	5,851	14,308	20,159	10.9
1992	5,838	14,692	20,530	10.4
1993	5,079	14,196	19,275	10.4
1994 <sup>b</sup>	4,984	13,658	18,642	9.4
1995	4,455	11,690	16,145	6.5
1996	4,488	12,278	16,766	6.0
1997	4,150	10,913	15,063	5.2
1998	4,227	9,635	13,862	4.2
1999	3,929	8,420	12,369	2.8
2000 <sup>c</sup>	3,715	9,085	12,800	2.4

<sup>a</sup> Does not include animals reclaimed by their owners.

<sup>b</sup> New Hampshire's Animal Population Control program was launched in 1994.

<sup>c</sup> Estimated (statistics from two shelters are carried forward from preceding year).

Source: New Hampshire Federation of Humane Societies, 2001. These data are taken from eight shelters that handle 95 percent of the stray and homeless animals in New Hampshire.

In addition, New Hampshire's shelter euthanasia rate has dropped 75 percent since the program's inception. Before 1994 when the program began, the state's euthanasia rate had been relatively stable at between 9.4 and 10.9 dogs and cats euthanized each year for every 1,000 people. New Hampshire's current euthanasia rate is 2.4 dogs and cats per every 1,000 residents.<sup>5</sup> This progress came during a decade in which the number of New Hampshire citizens increased by 11.4 percent.

New Jersey has administered its statewide subsidized Animal Population Control spay/neuter program since 1984. Dogs and cats owned by New Jersey citizens on public assistance can be spayed or neutered for \$10, and dogs and cats acquired from shelters can be sterilized for \$20. The program is funded through the \$10 and \$20 copayments, a \$3 surcharge on licenses of unneutered dogs, and sales of special animal-friendly license plates.

Despite funding shortfalls in recent years, New Jersey's Animal Population Control program has funded the sterilization of more than 136,000 dogs and cats since its inception. In 1984, when the program was created, some 161,000 dogs and cats were impounded by New Jersey shelters; of these, 83,000 (51 percent) were euthanized. In 1999, although the number of people residing in the state had increased by 8 percent since 1984, fewer than 115,000 dogs and cats were impounded (a 29 percent decline) and about 48,000 (42 percent) were euthanized.<sup>6</sup>