

PRESENTATION SUMMARY & POWERPOINT

The United States: What We've Achieved and a New Paradigm for Success

Esther Mechler, SPAY/USA

SPAY/USA began in 1990, at a time when we were euthanizing 12 million cats and dogs annually. Today, that number is generally agreed to be approximately 4.5 million. Factors in this reduction include:

- A national network of programs, clinics, private vets, organizations
- Numerous mobile clinics now serving rural areas
- Organized “spay blitzes” in isolated areas to provide direct action/help
- An emerging group of leaders dedicated to ending the surplus of cats and dogs
- Increasing popularity of TNR and information about how to catch and sterilize wild cats, how to manage colonies, how to popularize TNR as a method of population control
- Emergence of high-volume spay/neuter clinics in urban areas over 250,000 population
- Conferences on the specific topic of reducing unwanted litters
- Statewide programs, both public and private, to facilitate and promote spay/neuter

Despite all the positive factors, there are not enough veterinarians doing this specific job to keep up with the need and the demand. At too many clinics, there is a two- or three-month wait for appointments. Often clinics have to wait a long time to replace a vet who is retiring or moving away. Not enough vets are focused on spay/neuter surgery – they do not know how to do pediatric spays, spay feral cats or use the quick-spay method, which greatly improves efficiency.

We are holding our fingers in the dike. We cannot stop what we are doing or we will rapidly lose ground, but we also cannot do enough spay/neuter to get ahead of the twice-annual kitty tsunamis in much of our country.

Some other points made during this presentation:

- The formation of ACC&D after the Tools for the 21st Century Conference in Boston in 2000 has led to much cross-fertilization of work done in various parts of the world on companion animal sterilization and contraception.

Session VI: Who Needs a Nonsurgical Sterilant Anyway?

- Feral cats continue to be a large problem for rural and urban environments throughout our country.
- Hurricane Katrina drove home the work that still needs to be done in the South. A year after the disaster, there is a spay/neuter backlog of thousands of animals just in the local New Orleans area.
- Because vets cannot keep up with the demand and need for spay/neuter, they (we) need a nonsurgical sterilant.
- Veterinarians, animal protection organizations and animal advocates all need to get behind the development, approval and production of nonsurgical alternatives to spay/neuter. Both surgical and nonsurgical approaches can exist side by side, depending on what is most practical for the local situation.
- Success is defined as win-win, and in this case, the veterinarians will win, the caregivers of the animals, shelters, rescue groups and companion animal guardians will win, and the animals will win.

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ACC&D Third Symposium November 11, 2006

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In 1990...

- SPAY/USA began in 1990, when we were euthanizing, in shelters, about 12 million cats and dogs
- At that time, there was no mention of feral cats, and no estimates regarding their numbers

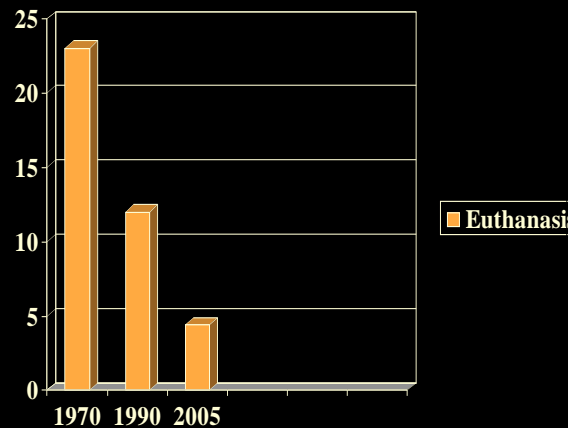
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In 2005...

- By 2005, the numbers were down by nearly 2/3
- We are now addressing -- although only with volunteers -- the feral issue



Factors in this Reduction...

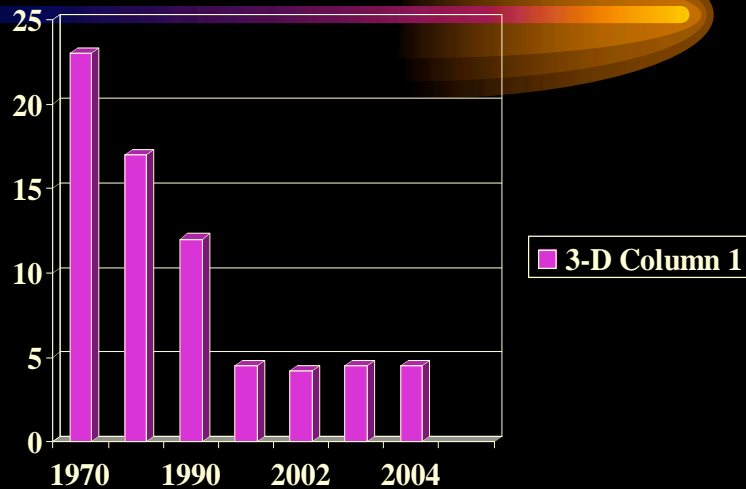
- National network of programs, clinics
- Mobile clinics serving rural areas
- Spay blitzes in very isolated areas
- High-volume, low-fee superclinics in cities
- Emerging leadership in s/n arena
- Increased popularity of TNR as a tool
- Regional conferences on ending the surplus
- Statewide programs to promote s/n

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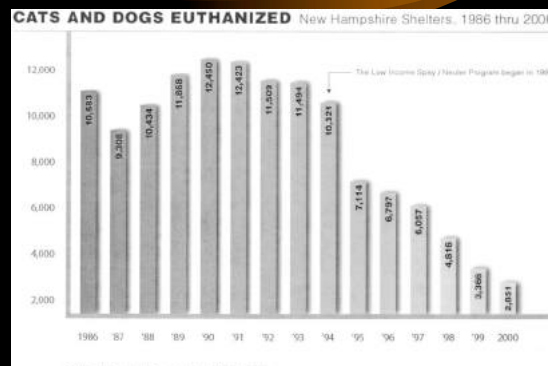
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At a National Level, We Have Reached a Plateau –



New Hampshire Reached a Parallel Plateau in the 1990's

- In N.H., the plateau was “broken” when a new and better delivery system for affordable s/n was introduced – in this case, a public s/n fund for the indigent



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New Delivery Systems Are Needed

- Cats are out-producing us:
 - Not enough veterinarians to meet need
 - Not enough veterinary colleges
 - (28 vet schools, 168 law schools)
 - Long waiting periods for appointments for s/n surgeries
 - Veterinary reluctance on the part of many to learn new techniques (i.e., pediatric, Quick-Spay)
 - We have our fingers in the dike
 - For now, that's the best we can do...the challenge ahead:

Breaking the Plateau

- Development of a national plan to coordinate efforts
- Development of statewide programs, both public and private, as in New Hampshire
- Leadership development for new advocates learning the skills of management, fundraising and legislative changes
- Development of nonsurgical alternatives to supplement spay/neuter

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National Plan:

- Need for coordination of efforts
- Need for information, statistics
- Need for leadership development to help new recruits become effective more quickly
- Need for a national system of statewide referral programs

Formation of ACC&D

- ACC&D was formed at the beginning of the 21st century to bring new delivery systems to tackle pet overpopulation
- Scientists are working from various starting points, and sharing information on what works and what does not
- The sharing of scientific information will hasten the development of the new delivery systems, which will be key in cutting surplus numbers

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Role of diverse groups in success of ACC&D: Veterinarians

- Veterinarians play a role of policymaking
- Veterinarians can be involved in the promotion of a new delivery system directly -- or working through vet techs
- Nonsurgical delivery methods help to make their job easier while advancing the cause of animal welfare
- At this time they are unable to keep up with the demand for and need of their services -- the new tools will help change all this

Role of animal advocates in success of new delivery system

- Thousands of local and state organizations can create a strong demand
- Large national groups such as the ASPCA have access to outreach to millions of members at the grassroots level
- By coordinating calls to action, considerable interest can be exerted
- The interest is already there ... rescue groups, shelters, feral cat colony caretakers are all asking for this new delivery system

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Think this has been hard so far !?

- The first drops in euthanasia have been easier to achieve than the coming ones
- We have been reaching those willing to bring in their animals – now we need to tackle:
 - The feral and stray cats
 - The urban and rural free-roaming dogs, too often “owned” by people unwilling to alter them
- Animal advocates in developing countries also want and need the newer tools to solve their problem, which is staggering in many countries

The New Paradigm

- Widespread acceptance by vets and the general public of nonsurgical methods of birth control is the first step
- A National Plan will help coordinate efforts to reduce the surplus of cats and dogs
- Statewide delivery systems will make spay/neuter more accessible to those in need
- Leadership development will ensure a new generation of qualified persons to manage programs and clinics
- The development of affordable nonsurgical alternatives to spay/neuter will increase the range of options available to veterinarians and cat/dog guardians – and *help check rising costs*