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Phil Arkow

The Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region

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ANIMAL CONTROL, BIRTH CONTROL, AND COMMUNITY
EDUCATION :
IMPACTS ON THE COLORADO SPRINGS
PET POPULATION, 1970 - 1984

Phil Arkow, Education and Publicity Director
The Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region
633 South 8th Street
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80901.

By 1973, The Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region, like so many animal shelters across the country, had become quite alarmed at the numbers of animals being euthanized each day. The fact that an agency chartered in 1949 to provide animal relief and rescue had become a humane slaughterhouse, killing upwards of 50 animals each day, was appalling to the organization's directors, staff, members, and to the public at large. It was becoming apparent that the Society's humane officers had become urban game wardens, routinely killing thousands of pets each year so that the rest could survive on limited resources. This is similar to the wild animal population control device called hunting. Though euthanasia is an effective population control measure, emotionally it left much to be desired, and it went against the grain of the Society's original purpose.

In 1973, the Society recognized that it was dealing with a "people" problem, rather than an "animal" problem, and that owning a pet is a responsibility rather than a right. A three-pronged program was started to place the responsibility for the runaway pet population where it belonged: with the pet-owning public. The three simultaneous efforts were Animal control, Birth control, and Community education - our "ABC's" of responsible pet ownership.

Our broad-based, overview-type approach often earned us the animosity of a few vociferous single-issue animal lovers. Portions of the public seeking quick and easy answers to a problem of which they may only recently have become aware, found the concept of spaying and neutering to be simplistically appealing. The Humane Society recognized that while spaying and neutering alone may be a partial solution in the short-term, there was a need for owner education in all aspects of responsible pet ownership. The Society felt that veterinarians, with their community exposure, high credibility among their clients, and greater levels of education, could and should be a powerful ally, for humane efforts to increase awareness of animal-related issues.

National and local media campaigns during the early 1970's served to heighten public awareness of the overpopulation issue. Given the increased awareness and the essentially emotional nature of the problem, it was easier for some members of the public to assimilate the concept of pet sterilization as being "the" answer rather than being "an" answer. The Humane Society's contention was then, and still is, that sterilization alone will not solve the problem, for spayed strays are as much of a municipal public health and safety nuisance as are intact free-roaming animals, and that without widespread education no owners' values can be changed.

Beginning in the mid-1970's, two different approaches were taken toward solution of the problem. First the Humane Society, in cooperation with numerous agencies and groups, greatly expanded and improved its Animal control, Birth control, and Community education programs. The second approach resulted in the opening of two independent spay/neuter clinics. The survival of these two clinics after several years indicate that they indeed have met a community need and are viable additions to solution of the problem. However, there has often been considerable rancor between the various parties and cooperation has ranged over the years from weak to nonexistent.

A decade later, it is safe to say that the intake of unwanted animals at the shelter has decreased, and that public awareness of the advantages and availability of pet sterilization has increased. But whether either pathway, or even the combined effects of both, have solved the "surplus" problem, or have attacked the root of the real problem -- namely, changing pet owners' values to foster a sense of responsible pet ownership and to encourage owners to make a lifelong commitment to their wards -- remains to be seen.

Demographics And Zoographics Of Colorado Springs

Colorado Springs is an excellent area in which to make studies of pet zoographics. First, as the seat of El Paso County and the only metropolitan area within the 100-mile gap between Denver and Pueblo, Colorado Springs is essentially an "island" in high animal populations can be measured without danger of overflow from other jurisdictions. Second, until 1983 the Humane Society maintained the only animal shelter in the region. (The second shelter served a limited number of animals impounded under county animal control and did not emphasize adoptions, it ceased operations after two years). Third, the Humane Society performs both humane and animal control functions, thereby giving the shelter not only a complete count of all stray and unwanted animals, but also a unique entree into vaccination and registration data. And fourth, the area is very representative of "Sunbelt," high-tech communities, characterized by recent growth, high mobility, and other demographics common to much of the West, Southwest and Florida.

TABLE 1

Population And Households, El Paso County, Colo., 1970-1984

YEAR	POPULATION				HOUSEHOLDS	
	TOTAL POP.	HOUSEHOLD POP.	GROUP MILITARY	QUARTERS CIVILIAN	HSLD	PERSONS/ HSLD
APR.1,1970	235,972	214,261	16,532	5,179	67,581	3.17
JAN.1,1971	250,670	231,580	14,030	5,060	74,430	3.11
JAN.1,1972	270,940	249,850	16,140	4,960	82,730	3.02
JAN.1,1973	285,190	268,550	11,810	4,830	90,050	2.98
JAN.1,1974	287,570	269,850	13,010	4,710	91,470	2.95
JAN.1,1975	288,880	271,290	13,000	4,600	93,230	2.91
JAN.1,1976	292,290	276,050	11,770	4,480	96,180	2.87
JAN.1,1977	293,580	278,130	11,090	4,360	98,280	2.83
JAN.1,1978	302,740	287,100	11,400	4,250	102,900	2.79
JAN.1,1979	307,250	291,450	11,680	4,130	106,370	2.74
JAN.1,1980	308,940	293,790	11,120	4,040	108,010	2.72
JAN.1,1981	312,960	295,980	12,930	4,060	109,620	2.70
JAN.1,1982	318,860	301,550	13,390	3,290	112,940	2.67
JAN.1,1983	321,630	304,020	13,850	3,770	115,160	2.64
JAN.1,1984	320,020	310,370	14,010	3,630	119,370	2.60

SOURCES: Figures for 1970 are from Bureau of the Census. 1970-1984 figures are PPACG estimates and are compatible with the 1980 Census county for El Paso County, which was 309,424. Figures may not add to totals because of rounding. PIKES PEAK COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS.

Figures compiled by the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (Table 1) demonstrate the rapid growth rate of 39% which El Paso County has experienced in the period 1970-1984. This population surge has continued despite fluctuations in military-based residential populations as the community has weaned itself away from an economy based primarily on five military installations. Of particular note is that the 39% increase in population has been compounded by a 76.6% increase in the number of households and by an 18% decrease in the number of persons per household. While Colorado Springs has boomed with the introduction of several computer-assembly and other high-tech industries, the community has also felt the effects of national economic forces in that increasing numbers of individuals and families are unable to afford traditional housing units. Consequently, though home-building continues at a healthy pace and remains a major industry, more and more new homes are of the condominium, condominium-converted apartment, or townhouse variety. It will subsequently be shown that these living conditions are not conducive to traditional patterns of pet ownership.

The decrease in persons per household tells us several things: first, the figure would appear to be consistent with national trends of high divorce

rates, nuclear families, and increasing numbers of people deferring or deciding against having children, particularly as the post-war "baby boom" generation matures and as more women enter the work force. (In fact, despite the surge in population over the 1970-84 period, several area schools have been closed in recent years due to declining enrollments.) Second, though these figures do not show it, the standard of living in El Paso County is considerably under many other metropolitan areas, and the "working wife" or two-income household is the norm rather than the exception.

All of these data, then, indicate a situation where the likelihood of a household having dogs is declining, while the ownership of cats is increasing. At the shelter, we frequently hear people explain that they do not want dogs because "no one will be home all day to take care of it," or that "it would be unfair to leave it alone in the house all day." It is not uncommon to have someone surrender their pet for adoption because they now have to work and they think -- humanely, but mistakenly -- that the animals will not adjust to loneliness. When people do want pets, they frequently ask for a "dog that won't grow too big," because they want to keep it indoors or in an apartment, condominium, or townhouse. Also, with couples having fewer children, one of the prime, traditional markets for people acquiring pets has been sharply curtailed.

These forces are consistent with the findings of three national surveys conducted in the 1970's by Frost & Sullivan, National Family Opinion, Inc., and National Analysts. It was reported that "...families with children six years of age or older are the primary dog owning group among family units." The major factor in acquiring a dog is as a pet for children, while the most compelling reason given for not owning a dog is the responsibility of ownership. (International Journal for the Study of Animal Problems, 1979)

But with the breakdown of the traditional family and an increase in job and home mobility comes a curious paradox: people become increasingly alienated from traditional social anchors and thereby more needy of the type of affection and bond which pets can provide. But the mobility and the inability of many people to make long-term plans leads to an increase in the subsequent rejection of those animals when behavior problems, or changes in the owner's job, lifestyle or living arrangement occur. All too often, the people who most need a pet find themselves forced to surrender their animal, either to a friend, relative, or relation who may, in turn, later recycle the pet; or to the Humane Society, where it may or may not be adopted and recycled back into the community. Though people want animals, in a culture where long-term commitments are increasingly impossible, it is hard for many people to assume the 15-year commitment a pet may require.

Two other curious aspects of the decrease in household size affect pet zoographics. More people are considering cats rather than dogs as pets, because of the perceived greater independence of cats or of their ability to care for themselves over a weekend or while the family is at work. Also, the

persons who are still considering dogs are gradually switching from big dogs to small dogs.

TABLE 2

Top Ten Dog Breeds, as Measured by American Kennel Club Registration,
Selected Years 1885-1982

BREED	1885	1895	1905	1915	1925	1935	1948	1964	1975	1982
Eng. setter	1	2	3	7						
Irish setter	2	7								
Irish water setter	3									
Pointer	4	3	5							
Cocker spaniel	5	6	6	8	10	2	1	8	7	2
Gordon setter	6									
Beagle	7	8	9	4	4	5	2	3	5	8
Collie	8	4	1	3	5		3	7	10	
Fox Terrier	9	5			7	4				
Dachshund	10					10	6	4	6	9
St. Bernard		1								
Great Dane		9								
Bull terrier		10	4	10						
Boston terrier			2	1	2	1	5			
Irish terrier			10							
Bulldog			7	5	9					
Airedale terrier			8	2	3					
Pomeranian						9		9		
French bulldog				6						
Pekingese				9	8	6	7	6		
German shepherd					1		10	2	2	5
Chow					6	7				
Scottish terrier						3				
Eng. springer spaniel						8				
Boxer							4			
Chihuahua							9	5		
French poodle								1	1	1
Basset hound								10		
Doberman pinscher									4	3
Miniature schnauzer									8	7
Labrador retriever									9	4
Golden retriever										6
Shetland sheepdog										10

Source: Life, Jan. 31, 1949, and AKC reports

Table 2 shows the rankings of the 10 most popular breeds in America for selected years since 1885, according to American Kennel Club registrations. The figures reveal the high popularity of large breeds of dogs such as Doberman pinschers, Labrador retrievers, German shepherds and golden retrievers. Though some breeds have remained consistently popular through the years (poodles are now in their 22nd year of top ranking, and the venerable collie, beagle, dachshund and cocker spaniel remain ever popular), the newer members of the top-10 tend to be large breeds. For example, in 1964, only two of the top 10 (German shepherd and collie) were large breeds: eight were medium or smaller varieties. But by 1974 the ratio had changed to five large (Labrador, Doberman, shepherd, St. Bernard and Irish setter) and five small. By 1975 and 1982 this had tapered off slightly to four of the 10 breeds being large. Contrast these figures for 1948 (two large breeds), 1940 (one) or 1930 (three).

Breed popularities run in cycles, and each year seems to bring an onslaught of demand for the latest "in" dog. Currently, golden labrador retrievers, chows and pit bulls are in high demand. The demand is especially exacerbated in a Western, country-type environment such as Colorado Springs with a high percentage of male owners in the 18-30 year age range, for whom the definition of status or "macho" image is a pick-up truck with several large dogs in back. Huskies, malamutes, St. Bernards, Weimaraners, pointers, Irish setters, and St. Bernards are particularly popular in our part of the country.

What has rarely been considered in pet zoographic studies is the impact of the size of the dog on dog overpopulation. A look at the puppy kennel in virtually any shelter in the country would reveal that puppy populations are almost exclusively mixes of large breed dogs. Rarely does a shelter receive a cockapoo or a terrier mix and, when these smaller breeds are received, they are frequently adopted almost immediately. If there is a pet dog "surplus," it is exacerbated by the population of large-breed dogs who (a) are not as cute when they outgrow puppyhood; (b) are more expensive and difficult to maintain when grown; and (c) have larger litters than their smaller counterparts. Where a poodle or Lhasa apso may have 3-4 pups per litter, it's not unusual for a St. Bernard or Great Dane to have 9-12.

There are two references to this phenomenon. Beck noted:

"Perhaps even more significant than the increase in the dog population during the 1960's was the increase in the 'biomass' of the population, that is, larger dogs became more popular ... The registration of the smaller breeds, e.g. poodles, beagles and dachshunds, were relatively unchanged between 1963 and 1972. However, registration of the larger breeds, e.g. German shepherds, Doberman pinschers and St. Bernards, increased six- to 12-fold during the same time period... Larger dogs also produce more waste and tend to inflict more serious bites... The

increase in larger dogs is probably the single most important reason why cities all over the United States held public hearings to review their animal control ordinances in the early 1970's."

In the study of dogs and cats in Las Vegas, Nassar, Mosier and Williams (1984) found similar instances of greater problems with large-breed dogs:

"At the pound, 24% of dogs were small breeds, 24% medium size breeds, and 52% large breeds. In the population, on the other hand, 35% were small breeds, 30% were medium size breeds, and 35% were large breeds. These figures indicate that the majority of dogs that roam may be large breeds."

We question the use of the term "surplus" to describe the pet overpopulation problem, because the word connotes, primarily, unwanted puppies for which there are no homes. Theoretically, if new puppies were the bulk of the overpopulation problem, the shelter would be inundated with newborn animals. However, our shelter has consistently received a constant percentage of puppies as measured against the total dog population received. Year after year, with and without spay programs, only about 18% of the thousands of dogs received are puppies; the other 82% are usually young dogs that have outlived their owners' impulses, or outgrown their cuteness, or older dogs for which the human/companion animal bond has been broken. Interestingly, the proportion of puppies received at the shelter has actually increased since the development of community spay/neuter programs, although this may be caused by changing animal control enforcement tactics, where stray dogs are ticketed if possible, rather than impounded.

TABLE 3

Puppies Received at Humane Society Shelter
as Percentage of Total Dogs Received

Year	Dogs Received	Puppies Received	Percentage
1973	14,602	2,624	18.0
1974	15,072	2,620	17.4
1975	16,576	2,716	16.4
1976	15,996	2,863	17.9
1977	15,280	3,016	19.7
1978*	14,583	2,278	15.6
1979	14,220	1,925	13.5
1980	12,782	2,548	19.9
1981	11,470	2,459	21.4
1982	10,996	2,317	21.1
1983	10,523	2,368	22.5
MEAN	13,287	2,521	18.5%

* FY 1978 was a 14-month year. These figures are adjusted to 12/14 of total received to keep consistent with other years.

These figures, in our opinion, substantiate the argument of Schneider (1975) that the "puppy supply-demand is self-regulating in that there is normally not a large overproduction of puppies," and that the major group of problem animals (i.e., those winding up in shelters) are those who become unwanted after becoming household pets. In these cases we feel the animal did its part to uphold its end of the bonding bargain, but it was the person who violated his or her part of the unspoken agreement. The majority of the dogs received at The Humane Society are in the 6-to-18 month age range, representing the larger breeds and breed mixes.

What has only recently been considered in professional discussions is the impact of cats in the population dynamics of a community. If more people are moving into smaller living quarters, and if more people want an animal which can be more self-sufficient during the day while all human parties in that household are at work and school, then more people will want cats. Unfortunately, few communities in this country have laws regarding cat control in the legislative process affecting animal control (which is in itself often a city's last priority) has not caught up with the realities of pet ownership in America. We believe that human demographics play more of a part in determining and affecting animal population than do any of the measures implemented by animal care and control agencies. However, the combined efforts of animal control, birth control and community education have resulted in a notable increase in public awareness and may have started us on the long road of changing public values vis-a-vis the companion animals that share our communities with us.

What is still unknown is whether the marketing techniques of the for-profit pet industry -- the breeders, pet shops, accessories dealers, and pet food manufacturers -- with their combined marketing strategies, have affected public values, or whether this segment of the industry, too, has merely been a response to public attitudes.

The "No-Deposit/No-Return Puppy"

It has been variously estimated that 15% of the owned dog population and 25% of the owned cat population leave the household annually (Schneider 1975) and that 16-20% of the dogs in a community pass through the shelter over the course of a year (Nassar and Mosier 1980 ; Quisenberry and Clapp 1983). In an extremely high-mobility community such as Colorado Springs, the high turnover of human populations exacerbates these estimates. Table 4 shows the Components of Population Change for El Paso County from 1970-1983. Currently, local population growth is running at an average annual rate of 1.6%. During the 1970-80 time span it averaged 2.8% per year, and in the years immediately before 1970 it was considerably higher, with soldiers and airmen bound for and returning from Vietnam. Military personnel are also retiring to the area, contributing to substantial population growth.

TABLE 4

Components of Population Change, El Paso County 1970-1983

YEAR	END OF YEAR POPULATION	CHANGE	BIRTHS	DEATHS	NET MIGRATION
1970	250,670	21,120	5,445	1,425	17,100
1971	270,840	20,270	5,595	1,497	16,172
1972	285,190	14,250	5,454	1,583	10,379
1973	287,570	2,380	5,807	1,634	-1,793
1974	288,880	1,310	5,729	1,563	-2,856
1975	292,290	3,410	5,837	1,574	-853
1976	293,580	1,290	5,706	1,607	-2,809
1977	302,740	9,160	5,387	1,513	5,286
1978	307,250	4,510	5,632	1,650	528
1979	308,940	1,690	5,732	1,702	-2,340
1980	312,959	4,019	5,805	1,707	-79
1981	318,857	5,898	6,259	1,753	1,392
1982	321,633	2,776	6,482	1,771	-1,935
1983	328,015	6,382	6,357	1,762	1,787

SOURCE: Births and deaths are from the Colorado Department of Health. Figures for 1983 are estimates subject to revisions. Net migration was calculated as a residual. Population figures are PPACG estimates and are for December 31st of each year. PIKES PEAK AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS.

The ratios of pets:people and pets:households have been estimated by various methods. In Las Vegas, Nevada, it was estimated that 46% of the households had dogs with an average of 1.49 dogs per household for those households with dogs; for cats, the figures were 22% and 1.61. It was estimated the ratio of pets to people was 1:3.92 for dogs and 1:7.74 for cats (Nassar, Mosier and Williams 1984). In Manhattan, Kansas, it was estimated that the ratio of dogs to people was 1:4.14 (Nassar and Mosier 1980). A survey of Alameda and Contra Costa counties, California, estimated the ratio at 1:7.3 for dogs and 1:10.8 for cats, with dogs present in 35.8% of household and cats in 21.3% (Schneider and Vaida 1975). Beck found estimates of dog ownership ranging from 37% to 51% of all households, depending on neighborhood influences (Beck 1973). Recently, Rowan estimated figures for Massachusetts and the Northeastern states as 36.4% of households owning dogs and 25.2% owning cats, with 1.33 dogs and 1.78 cats per household for those owning animals (Rowan 1984). Three national surveys have attempted to determine the percentage of households owning pets and numbers of pets per

pet-owning household on a nationwide scale. These figures are presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5

National Estimates of Pet Population

Year of Survey	Percent of households with dogs	No. of dogs per household	Percent of cats per household	No. of cats per household	Source
1971	38	1.4	22.6	1.7	Beck 1974a, Beck 1974b, Beck 1976
1975	43	1.416	22	1.579	Wilbur 1976
1983	42.5	1.54	28.4	2.18	Dow 1984

Unfortunately, there are few areas such as Sedgwick County, Kansas, where animal population censuses are required and are included annually with the assessor's office property survey. We desperately need more accurate data. In the absence of such precise figure, we are forced to take the three national estimates of pets per household in Table 5, and interpolate constant growth or decline rates for the intervening years. Using these estimates, we project the El Paso County pet population for 1971-1983 as follows:

TABLE 6

Dog and Cat Population Estimates, El Paso County, Colorado 1971-1983

Year	% hshlds. owning dogs	# of dogs/hshlds.	% of hshlds. owning cats	# of cats/hshlds.	# of hshlds.	Est. dog pop.	Est. cat pop.	Total est. dog & cat pop.
1971	38.0	1.4	22.6	1.7	82,730	44,012	31,785	75,797
1972	39.25	1.404	22.45	1.669	90,050	49,624	33,741	83,365
1973	40.5	1.408	22.3	1.639	91,470	52,160	33,432	85,592
1974	41.75	1.412	22.15	1.609	93,230	54,960	33,227	88,187
1975	43.0	1.416	22.0	1.579	96,180	58,562	33,411	91,973
1976	42.937	1.431	22.8	1.654	98,280	60,386	37,063	97,449
1977	42.875	1.447	23.6	1.729	102,900	63,839	41,988	105,827
1978	42.812	1.462	24.4	1.804	106,370	66,578	46,822	113,400
1979	42.75	1.478	25.2	1.879	108,010	68,246	51,144	119,390
1980	42.687	1.493	26.0	1.955	109,620	69,863	55,720	125,583
1981	42.625	1.509	26.8	2.029	112,940	72,644	61,414	134,058
1982	42.562	1.524	27.6	2.105	115,160	74,698	66,906	141,604
1983	42.5	1.54	28.4	2.18	119,370	78,128	73,904	152,032

If these estimates are accurate, then we also find that the Humane Society animal shelter receives a considerable percentage of the local pet population annually, consistent with the estimates made by Schneider, Nassar and Mosier, and Quisenberry and Clapp cited above. The estimates in Table 7 are further exacerbated by two conditions (1) dog control laws extended only throughout part of El Paso County; and (2) cat control is very limited in the City of Colorado Springs and non-existent in El Paso County.

TABLE 7

Dogs and Cats Received at Shelter as Percentage of Total County

Dog and Cat Population, 1971-1983

Year	Estimated Dog Population	Dogs Received	Percentage	Estimated Cat Population	Cats Received	Percentage
1971	44,102	10,613	24.1	31,785	6,000	18.9
1972	49,624	12,940	26.1	33,741	6,309	18.7
1973	52,160	14,602	28.0	33,432	6,063	18.1
1974	54,960	15,072	27.4	33,227	5,444	16.4
1975	58,562	16,576	28.3	33,411	6,345	19.0
1976	60,386	15,996	26.5	37,063	6,675	18.0
1977	63,839	15,280	23.9	41,988	6,341	15.1
1978	66,578	14,583	21.9	46,822	5,860	12.5
1979	68,246	14,220	20.8	51,144	6,122	12.0
1980	69,863	12,782	18.3	55,720	5,663	10.2
1981	72,644	11,470	15.8	61,414	5,126	8.3
1982	74,698	10,996	14.7	66,906	5,462	8.2
1983	78,128	10,523	13.5	73,904	5,935	8.0
MEAN			22.25			14.1

* FY 1978 was a 14-month year. These figures are adjusted to 12/14 of the total received for consistency with other years.

According to a number of surveys, the number of animals recycled back into a community from the shelter is minimal, causing us to question the efficacy of shelter-generated spay-neuter programs. Rowan (1984) estimated the dog and cat population of Massachusetts to be 1,893,750 of which 450,000 would pass through shelters annually and 80% of those would be euthanized; thus, only 90,000 dogs and cats, or 4.8% of the total, are returned back to the community. Dow (1982) found that, nationally, only 10.5% of the dogs surrendered to a shelter had been acquired from a shelter: the overwhelming

majority of unwanted animals had been acquired from friends or neighbors (46.8%). (For Colorado Springs, the figures were 10% and 58%, respectively). Interestingly, Dow also found that 68.1% of the unwanted animals had been acquired free of charge. There appears to be a direct correlation between cost of an animal and the degree of commitment to the pet (Arkow and Dow 1984). In all cities surveyed the overwhelming majority of unwanted animals came from friends, neighbors, family hand-me-downs, or advertisements in newspapers -- not from breeders, kennels, shelters, or pet shops. Similar findings were noted in the Las Vegas survey (Nassar, Mosier and Williams 1984):

"Dogs acquired from breeders and pet shops were represented with considerably less frequency in the pound (significantly less than their representation in the population). This may imply that they did not roam as much as dogs from other sources. Dogs born at home or acquired from the pound were represented at the pound at a much higher frequency than their representation in the population, implying that these dogs were allowed to roam more often than others. Approximately 15% of the dog and cat pet population were handled at the pound per year. There is evidence that a majority of roaming dogs and cats are owned animals."

As is the case in other communities, the impact made by shelter animals on the dog and cat population as a whole is minimal in El Paso County. Table 8 shows the number of dogs and cats released back out into the community:

TABLE 8

Animal Adoptions as Percentage of Pets In El Paso County, 1971-1983

Year	Est.	# of dogs	%	Est.	# of cats	%
1971	44,012	1,821	4.1	31,785	579	1.8
1972	49,624	2,275	4.6	33,741	681	2.0
1973	52,160	2,682	5.1	33,432	844	2.5
1974	54,960	2,946	5.4	33,227	939	2.8
1975	58,562	3,212	5.5	33,411	996	3.0
1976	60,386	2,545	4.2	37,063	808	2.2
1977	63,839	2,429	3.8	41,988	838	2.0
1978	66,578	2,337*	3.5	46,822	978*	2.1
1979	68,246	2,436	3.6	51,144	1,007	2.0
1980	69,863	2,641	3.8	55,720	1,102	2.0
1981	72,644	2,168	3.0	61,414	864	1.4
1982	74,698	1,956	2.6	66,906	829	1.2
1983	78,128	1,961	2.5	73,904	1,107	1.5
Mean			3.98			2.04

*FY 1978 was a 14-month year. These figures have been adjusted to 12/14 of the total adopted for consistency with other years.

Table 8 shows that approximately 4% of the El Paso County dog population and 2% of the cat population has been adopted from the shelter. (An equal number of other dogs and cats have passed through the shelter as strays and been reclaimed by their owners, but the Humane Society has no jurisdiction over these animals for compliance with mandatory spay/neuter requirements.)

Thus, we are forced to conclude that there is an extremely high mobility and turnover among our community's human and pet populations -- even before we or the spay clinics can begin to affect either population counts or owners' value systems. Two significant examples of this mobility are the following figures:

1. Of the 28,000 dog licenses issued annually in the City of Colorado Springs, approximately 40% (11,200), will be invalid for content next year, because either the dog has gone to a new home, the owners have moved, or due to normal mortality.
2. The high percentage of military-based families in our area may contribute to the big turnover of pets and exacerbate the extant conditions of pet disposability. In a unique study of the impact of pets in the lives of military families, Catanzaro (1984) found family attitudes towards pets similar to those in civilian populations, but that 28.0% of these military families would not take their pets with them if they were transferred domestically, and 50.7% would not if transferred overseas.

Impact of Sterilization

With increasing awareness and concern in the 1970's over pet euthanasia rates, and under pressure from several individuals and animal welfare organizations, the Humane Society began exploring the feasibility of implementing a more widespread spay /neuter program. At that time, the Society required all female dogs and cats adopted from the shelter to be spayed; a deposit was paid at the time of adoption, which was then applied toward the total cost of the surgery performed by any veterinarian in the Pikes Peak Region. This approach encouraged female spaying and the development of client-practitioner relationships within the community. However, it had the unfortunate side-effect of dooming a high percentage of female dogs and cats to death at the shelter ; some 82% of the dogs and 75% of the cats adopted were males, as people sought to avoid the higher-priced females.

In 1974, the Colorado Springs Area Veterinary Society, continuing and formalizing its long-standing and excellent working relationship with the Humane Society, initiated a low-cost spay/neuter program for shelter animals. The veterinarians offered a proposal to perform low-cost sterilizations for all dogs and cats adopted from the shelter (see appendix A). The proposal was unanimously approved and accepted by the Humane Society. Though the fees and

rates have increased slightly over the years due to inflation, the Proposal still serves as the framework by which all area veterinarians and the Humane Society continue their unique and effective cooperative relationship. Our Humane Society has always enjoyed a fine working relationship with virtually all area veterinarians, and we are proud to say that we do not have "a veterinarian" at the shelter, but rather we have 71 veterinarians, all serving the shelter, all placed strategically throughout the community where they are (a) close-at-hand for our field emergencies ; and (b) close-at-hand to their future clients, able to develop the long-term client-practitioner relationship that furthers the cause of humane animal care, veterinary treatment, and pet owner education.

Two precursor conditions to the 1974 Proposal should be noted:

1. In 1973, the Humane Society conducted a survey of the 3.5 veterinarians then in the area to determine a baseline of how many sterilizations were being performed annually by private practitioners, without the existence of a spay clinic. Though estimates were rough, it was estimated that, at that time, some 6,000 dog and cats per year were already being sterilized and taken out of the breeding pool in Colorado Springs. To the best of our knowledge, no spay/neuter study, even in those communities with municipal spay clinics, has ever demonstrated a net increase in sterilizations above and beyond the baseline normally performed by private veterinary practitioner. As Schneider (1975) noted:

"Before the concern for 'overproduction' was publicized, owners were voluntarily neutering bitches and queens at record proportions and still the 'overproduction' occurred...The concept that lower income owners in our society are indeed, because it is their pets that are the major source of excess productivity, may be a myth...The overwhelming ownership of dogs and productivity of puppies in these counties are in the hands of persons whose income is relatively high...In effect, clinic neutering programs will be doing mostly replacement animals for the middle class owner, and thus, probably will not have a major effect on the proportions neutered in the total populations."

It is our contention that the presence of spay clinics, and awareness of these clinics primarily through word-of-mouth advertising, has resulted in a notable increased acceptance in public of the advantages of pet sterilization and some increase in the total number of animals sterilized. However, the degree of this increase is impossible to ascertain due to unavailability of accurate data. Organizations conducting spay clinics are undoubtedly experiencing a boost to their image and public relations position, but whether the clinics are responsible for what many have noted to be a trend in reduced shelter intake remains to be seen.

2. For a year prior to the implementation of the 1974 discount program, all Colorado Springs area veterinarians participated in a program of free pet sterilizations. "Program 200" provided 200 free surgeries to any pet owner who was on welfare (i.e., was truly needy). This program was discontinued due to lack of participation. This phenomenon appears to be consistent with Schneider's observations (above) as well as with results of the 1971 Market Research Corporation of America and 1975 National Analysts surveys (International City Management Association 1976). These surveys found a direct correlation with household income and the rate of pet ownership, with only 25% of families under \$5,000 annual income owning dogs, compared with 45% for families earning \$15,000 and over.

Following the acceptance of the Proposal, the Humane Society's spay/neuter program was expanded, and in 1981 we required that male dogs and cats be included in the mandatory sterilization requirement. Again, low-cost rates were made available at the veterinarian of the owner's choice.

Meanwhile, in 1977 the first of two specialized, maverick spay clinics opened in Colorado Springs. That clinic has refused to release figures as to how many animals have been sterilized throughout its existence except to say "over 20,000." A second clinic, opening in April, 1982, provided the following figures for the period of April 15, 1982 - March 15, 1984:

Male cats:	760	Male dogs:	456
Female cats:	<u>675</u>	Female dogs:	<u>602</u>
TOTAL DOGS:	1,435	TOTAL DOGS:	1,058

TOTAL: 2,493

The Humane Society has succeeded in spaying or neutering approximately 66% of the dogs and cats adopted since the low-cost spay/neuter program was implemented. (Of the other 34%, approximately 16% are returned to the shelter for a variety of reasons before the surgery is performed ; the other 18% are either relocated out-of-town or out-of-state, or surgery is never performed despite the Society's efforts to contact the owners. In these cases, the pre-paid deposit is forfeited and applied to other animal welfare needs.)

Unfortunately, we are unable to determine the number or percentage of dogs and cats in the Colorado Springs area that are sterilized. This is some data from other cities. The Las Vegas study (Nassar, Mosier and Williams 1984) found the following figures:

<u>Percentage of Dogs and Cats in Las Vegas That Are Sterilized</u>			
Male cats:	78.95%	Male dogs:	26.49%
Female cats:	85.7%	Females dogs:	77.22%

Nassar, Mosier and Williams also found that of the unspayed females, only 17% of the dogs and 6% of the cats reproduce. In the Manhattan, Kansas study (Nassar and Mosier 1980), it was found that 66% of the female dogs in that city were spayed. In Colorado Springs, between 55-60% of the 2,800 licensed dogs are spayed or neutered.

Changes in Animal Shelter Programs

As with many shelters, there have been several programmatic changes over the last 13 years, all of which may deeply impact these figures, so that the sterilization question is not the only variable at work. For example, the raising of the pre-payment fee for spaying and neutering -- even though the surgery was being performed at a discount -- raised significantly the outlay involved at the time of adoption, to the point where adoptions at the shelter have consistently declined. The recent emergence of a loose non-sheltered network of "pet-saver" foster homes may also be a factor. Even the implementation of credit card procedures to "Charge-A-Dog" have not stayed the downward trend. Similarly, in 1975 and again in 1984 dog license fees were increased which also added to the initial outlay involved among would-be adopters. These fees have involved both the city and county adding their support for pet sterilization, with a licensing differential to encourage spaying and neutering. In 1975 the City of Colorado Springs implemented differential dog license rates of \$4 and \$12, and El Paso County followed suit the following year. In 1984 the city rates were increase to \$5 and \$15. But even with an \$8 or \$10 rebate coming back to the adaptor upon completion of his or her contractual agreement to sterilize the pet, many potential adopters walk out the door rather than pay \$56 or \$66 for an animal, and many others renege on the terms of their agreement.

As stated earlier, the 1981 change requiring males as well as females to be sterilized up an adoption (or when reaching six months of age) had the effect of balancing the male-to-female ratio of pets adopted. At one point prior to that policy change, the Society calculated the relative merits of mandatory-vs.-optional sterilization during Fiscal Year 1976, with the low-cost program mandatory for females and optional for males, the following animals were adopted and sterilized:

	Adopted	Male	Percent	Female	Percent
DOGS:	2,545	2,087	82.0	458	18.0
Taking advantage of low-cost program		77	3.7	305	67.0
CATS:	808	607	75.0	201	25.0
Taking advantage of low-cost program		42	6.9	134	67.0

Other programmatic changes have had effects on the shelter's animal population. In 1982 the Humane Society lost its animal control contract with El Paso County, and in 1983 lost the county housing contract (while still retaining the contract with the City of Colorado Springs), thereby reducing by approximately 1,000 the number of dogs brought in annually. In 1980, the enforcement division began a program emphasizing issuing citations to animal control violators, rather than impound an animal ; this approach is more cost-effective to the shelter and have a greater impact upon the owner, as it serves as a form of education and tends to punish the owner rather than the animal. This approach is necessary because, in 1983, only 25.9% of the stray dogs and 5.2% of the stray cats impounded were reclaimed by their owners. The rest of the owners simply didn't care. (Incidentally, the comparable figures for Las Vegas were 20.4% for dogs and 7% for cats.)

Finally, in 1973 the Humane Society began a widespread community awareness program with complete school and media exposure and a high profile-high image campaign, which continues to this day. As with the other components of the three-pronged approach, the results of the Community education program are difficult to ascertain and long-term results are the objective. It is hoped that the cumulative effects of Animal control, Birth control, and Community education will be to increase owner awareness of, and especially commitment to, the 150,000 + animals who share our community with us.

Recommendations

1. Since the trend toward cat ownership appears heading for a long-term increase, the City of Colorado Springs, and other municipalities nationwide, should begin cat regulation and registration system to provide more accurate data and to prevent predictable public health and safety nuisances before they occur.

2. Data regarding animal populations should be included in local and national censuses and other information-gathering networks. However, it should be noted that the U.S. Census Bureau categorically rejected our requests, beginning in 1976, to have such data included in the 1980 Census.

3. More accurate data than has heretofore been assembled should be available through the marketing departments of the pet food manufacturers, who make annual tallies of the quantities and types of pet food sold in the U.S. These indicators should be as good as any in ascertaining the types and sizes of pet dogs and cats kept in American households, and the influences of economic conditions on pet ownership. Conferences such as this should include representatives of the pet food, pet shop, and pet supply industries.

4. A full marketing study is needed to determine not only the number of pets that are sterilized, but also why the decision is made to have the surgery performed. Data in this crucial area are lacking. For example, one study found that the decision to spay the family pet is made by the housewife in 71% of all cases. The main reasons cited were convenience: 41% did not want male dogs "hanging around," 21% wanted to avoid soiling, and 7% cited miscellaneous reasons. Only 31% cited pregnancy prevention. Unfortunately, the survey did not cover neutering of male pets or determine what percentage of owners spayed their pets because of pet overpopulation publicity (American Humane Association 1978). Said AHA Field Consultant J.J. Shaffer, "Humane society programs that urge spaying seem more likely to achieve success by stressing convenience to the owner first and litter prevention second."

5. More research is needed into the feasibility of enacting, implementing, and enforcing breeding permit laws as an animal control adjunct to other population control means.

6. More research is needed into the economic factors affecting animal shelters the law of supply and demand impacts shelter populations. For example, fewer animals coming in does not appear to increase the percentage of adoptions. It would appear that fewer animals coming in results in less of a selection for would-be adopters to choose from.

7. A combined national effort should be made to encourage the keeping of smaller animals as pets. These animals are not only less likely to add to pet overpopulation, but are less likely to be animal control nuisances. The efforts of such marketing groups as the Pets Are Wonderful Council should be

redirected into campaigns such as, "Pets are wonderful, but smaller pets are even more wonderful." Perhaps this could be called a "Small Wonder" campaign.

8. All parties involved should discontinue any internecine fighting and concentrate their efforts on a combined attack against the true enemy: the irresponsible pet owner. When 75% of our stray dogs and 95% of our stray cats are not reclaimed by their owners, out of ignorance or apathy, a truly shameless condition exists in our country.

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Appendix A.

PROPOSAL PRESENTED BY THE COLORADO SPRINGS VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

We of the Colorado Springs Veterinary Medical Society realize that the humane organizations of the region are in need of low cost surgical sterilization of pet animals to maintain control of the population problem, but at the same time encourage placement of these animals. In addition, they need coordinated medical capabilities to meet their emergency needs, maintain the general health of the animals in their shelters, and to aid in the healthy transition of those animals placed in new homes.

It is our feeling that, in a spirit of cooperation, our organization can provide these services at a lower total cost with better overall results than those attained through the establishment of a separate facility subsidized by the humane society and/or the tax payers.

We would propose the following as a six month trial plan to evaluate its feasibility and effectiveness in accomplishing the desired goals of all parties concerned. As the end of this trial period, it would be reviewed on the basis of cost and merit by both the Humane Society and Veterinary Medical Society of the region for acceptance or rejection on that basis.

- (1) We would provide emergency out of hours medical attention for \$ 16.00 and regular hour service for \$6.00 on animals presented by or through this humane society. These costs would be fixed

with regard to all services provided on a particular animal, and would include all drugs and materials and professional time necessary to either treat the animal, or render emergency measures such that the animal's condition would be stabilized and rendered free of pain. There would be no additional work performed or expense incurred until such time as the Humane Society or owner were contacted and the case discussed with regard to prognosis and total expense entailed in proceeding. There would be a \$2.00 per day boarding charge while waiting on these decisions.

We would provide a roster of veterinary hospitals on call to the Humane Society for each day of the month ; and this would be set up in such a fashion that there would be no difficulty in getting necessary emergency attention when needed.

(2) We would continue to provide a free office call to evaluate all adopted animals from the shelter and consult with the new owner as to proper care and needs of the animal.

(3) We would continue to provide a \$2.00 donation to the Humane Society on each rabies vaccination administered with their certificate.

(4) We would provide free of charge veterinary consultation with regard to general health and management problems occurring within the shelter itself as requested by the responsible parties of the Humane Society.

(5) We would provide surgical sterilization of all adopted animals from the shelter as follows:

Dog spays.....	\$25.00
Cat spays.....	\$20.00
Dog castrations..	\$15.00
Cat castrations...	\$7.50

Considering the necessary professional time, hospitalization, equipment, packs, and general overhead ; these figures closely reflect actual costs to perform these procedures within the standards of quality which we demand. Consequently, there would be no donation to the Humane Society on these services.

(6) We would allow responsible members of the Humane Society to propose true hardship cases to our Committee on Welfare for consideration in qualifying for additional cost reduction for necessary services.

In the interest of organization and authenticity, we would provide these services as stated to the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region exclusively. The surgical procedures would be provided for animals adopted from the shelter and presented by the new owner with official certificate.

We would extend these same services to other humane organizations based on the approval of the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region as authorized by the issuance of an official certificate through their office. We would depend heavily on the Humane Society of Pikes Peak Region to authorize, monitor, and follow up on these cases to insure the spirit of the proposal is not misused by individuals not associated with established, recognized, humane animal organizations.

The acceptance of this proposal, even on a trial basis, would preclude the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region and other humane organizations participating and receiving the benefits of said proposal from continuing in the promotion of a subsidized spay-neuter clinic and/or using this issue in "open house" or fund raising activities for the purpose of stirring public interests and sentiments in this regard.

The acceptance of this proposal, even on a trial basis, would indicate a spirit of cooperation between the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region and the Veterinary Medical Society of Colorado Springs. In this regard we would encourage, and in fact insist upon jointly approved press releases with regard to issues having a direct bearing on either party.