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ANIMAL CONTROL IN FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA

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HUMAN DEMOGRAPHICS

Fairfax County is located on the Virginia side of the Potomac River across from Washington, D.C. Its 1985 population of 678,000 occupies an area of 399 square miles. The county has experienced an average annual growth rate of 2.6% during the years 1973 to 1983. The population growth during this period is displayed in Table I.

TABLE I

Population Growth Fairfax County 1970 - 1983			
Year	Total Population*	Year	Total Population
1970	454,275**	1977	562,800
1971	470,600	1978	571,000
1972	487,600	1979	584,200
1973	505,700	1980	596,901
1974	522,200	1981	612,600
1975	537,200	1982	620,800
1976	544,500	1983	630,400

*Figures are rounded to the nearest one hundred when estimates are used.

**Datum is 1970 Census total population figure after 1975 revision.

Sources: 1970 and 1980 - U.S. Census, Department of Commerce
Data obtained from Fairfax County Office of Research and
Statistics for years 1971 to 1979, and 1981 to 1983.

Examination of U.S. census figures indicates a shift in the population age distribution toward older age groups. From 1960 to 1980 the percent of children ages 0 to 14 years, has declined to almost half its original value. This decline is reflected in an increase in the median age from 25 to 29.1 years of age.

Fairfax is an affluent county with an estimated median family income of \$47,600 in 1983. Based on 1979 figures, only 17.3% of the households had income less than \$15,000.

ANIMAL CONTROL

The Fairfax County Department of Animal Control was formed in 1972 after the County assumed control of the animal shelter, which had previously been operated by a local humane society.

The Department is responsible for providing services and enforcing laws pertaining to both domestic animals and wildlife. The department which has a staff of fifty, is involved in a variety of activities including, provision of temporary shelter and adoption service for stray and surrendered animals, 24-hour emergency service for injured strays, quarantine of animals which have bitten humans, assistance in the removal of stray dogs and wildlife from public areas, conducting humane education programs and issuance of hunting permits. In 1975, the department in a cooperative arrangement with the Northern Virginia Veterinary Medical Association, also developed a reduced cost spay/neuter program for shelter adopted animals.

The animal control activities conducted by the department from 1977 to 1983 are summarized in Table II.

TABLE II

Fiscal Year	Citizen Complaints Investigated	Summon Issued	Warnings Issued	Injured Animals	Licenses Sold
1977	13,699	1,680	2,102	621	25,342
1978	16,770	2,900	2,561	982	26,094
1979	15,393	2,271	2,258	992	22,339
1980	15,835	1,618	2,025	1,146	21,505
1981	15,826	1,726	1,615	955	18,800
1982	17,398	1,393	1,623	1,115	19,268
1983	25,463	1,476	1,067	2,240	18,849

Notable, is the increase in the number of citizen's complaints and the number of injured animals. The increase in complaints is most likely due to the heightened public concern over the rabies epizootic. Examination of the data on animal impoundment and disposition (Table II) reveals an upward trend in the percentage of animals euthanized. This increase emerged after a fall off from a peak of over 60% in the early 70's, and may be attributable to the rabies outbreak. The jump is most dramatic when wildlife numbers are included.

When analyzed on a species basis, the numbers of dogs impounded from 1977 to 1983 is noted to remain relatively constant while the numbers of cats has increased by 16 percent.

Table III

F/Y	Animals Impounded				Animals Redeemed	Animals Adopted	Animals Euthan.	%Euthan/ %Impounded
	Dogs	Cats	Wildlife	Total				
1977	7,696	3,909	816	12,421	2,849	3,160	5,486	44
1978	8,127	4,089	949	13,164	2,936	3,232	5,950	45
1979	8,673	4,590	914	14,077	2,838	3,138	6,291	45
1980	8,354	4,197	960	13,547	2,971	3,189	5,724	42
1981	8,127	4,099	987	13,213	3,162	3,344	5,151	39
1982	7,962	4,199	1,791	13,952	2,878	2,914	6,281	52 (36)*
1983	7,223	4,533	4,391	16,147	2,741	2,425	7,907	49 (51)*

* Excluding Wildlife

During this six year period, a downward trend in the number of animals released by owners as a percentage of the total number impounded, has been observed. This percentage has fallen rather sharply from approximately 60% in 1973 to 35% in 1983.

In 1984, a door to door survey of 2,256 pet owning households, revealed that 56.9% of the dogs and 76.3% of the cats were sterilized. The average age of the dogs and cats in the households surveyed was 5.85 years and 6.23 years respectively.

RABIES

In February 1982, the first case in ten years of rabies was detected. Subsequently positive rabies cases were identified that year with 277 of these cases involving raccoons. During 1983, there were 357 positive cases of rabies reported. The department's workload increased significantly during 1982 and 1983 and is expected to remain at a high level because of the rabies endemic situation, for a period of years. The number of animal bite cases reported and animals quarantined however has not fluctuated much during the six year span from 1977 to 1983. There appears to be good compliance to regulations concerning rabies vaccination, with 94.6% of the dogs and 92.7% of the cats in surveyed households reported to be inoculated.

Table IV

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Bite Cases Reported</u>	<u># Animals Quarantined</u>
1977	1,495	1,425
1978	1,231	1,191
1979	1,187	1,129
1980	1,214	1,127
1981	1,100	1,025
1982	1,320	1,251
1983	1,592	1,517