Multnomah County (Ore.) Animal Control gives rebates to dog owners who have their pets sterilized. Applicants for the rebate must be residents of Multnomah County, have licenses for their dogs and have had household incomes of $10,000 or less the previous year. The only proof of income required is a statement of affirmation signed by the applicant -- anyone who falsifies such a statement can be prosecuted for perjury, and that fact appears on the statement. The county believes requiring more detailed proof would be a burden to check and a deterrent to applicants. There is no attempt either to screen out applicants who have received such assistance elsewhere.

The county distributes an attractive short pamphlet describing the rebate and explaining what spay and neuter operations are.

When the surgery is done, the applicant has the veterinarian fill out a form supplied by Animal Control, and this form is presented at the county offices. The applicant receives a check for $20 for a spay operation, or $15 for a neuter operation, from Animal Control funds.

Some of the advantages of a rebate system are:

- Capital investment in the form of building clinics for reduced fee spay/neuter operations was necessary.
- Administrative costs amount to less than 1% of the funds used in the program.
- Veterinarians find the rebate more acceptable than the county performing actual surgeries.
- Dog owners can go to veterinarians located near them and have surgeries done fairly quickly.
- Responsibility for the animal's health rests with the person's own veterinarian.
- The rebate can be increased to keep up with increasing surgery prices.

The rebates -- in combination with reduced license fees for sterilized animals, public education and strict law enforcement -- have reduced the estimated dog population in the county by 20,000 since 1974.

The City of Los Angeles presents an annual St. Francis of Assisi Award for humane treatment of animals. The award was conceived in 1971 by Mayor Tom Bradley, and entries are solicited from the public. The winner is selected by the Los Angeles City Department of Animal Regulation Board of Commissioners.

Winners receive an inscribed oak plaque, and in past years, have included a family who opened their home to forgotten animals and a wildlife preservationist.

A companion award goes to an organization or individual in the media for outstanding journalistic effort on behalf of humane treatment of animals.

Gail M. Snider

Photographer Bonnie Smith found this vehicle in a North Carolina town and photographed it as an example of poor animal control. The animals are kept in an airless crate on a pickup truck with no disease control. Better conditions for them would be more humane and result in more community respect and cooperation for the dog warden.