Fourteen animal welfare groups and government agencies in the Washington, D.C., area cooperated in Spay-Neuter Week 1978, March 26-April 1. This approach to encouraging animal sterilization can be adapted to other communities, with possible expansion to a month-long effort.

The coalition developed a publicity campaign urging pet owners to have their animals sterilized, and the effort resulted in a three-fold increase in phone inquiries to the major reduced fee spay/neuter programs in the area. Veterinarians reportedly experienced a similar increase in surgery requests. Inquiries came in long after the week was over.

Project chairman Jerry Southern of United Humanitarians, Inc. (Washington Branch), said that each sponsor group contributed $25 (with some extra individual contributions), and that amount more than paid for printing and distribution of flyers and news releases. Friends of Montgomery County ( Md.) Animals, Inc. purchased quarter-page advertisements in The Washington Post and The Washington Star. Spay-Neuter Week was also featured twice on local television news.

The materials gave the phone numbers of United Humanitarians, Inc., and Spay, Inc. -- callers were then referred to a reduced fee spay/neuter program in their area. Southern said a survey had been conducted to gather up-to-date information on area programs.

Southern predicts that Spay/Neuter Week will become an annual event. He recommends that organizations interested in such a program begin planning six months in advance and that the duties of all participants be clearly defined.

He believes the Washington effort was successful in motivating people who knew of the need for pet sterilization but had simply been procrastinating.

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and The Humane Society of the United States have produced a three-part series of videotape programs on animal shelter management.

The series is called Changing Your Image, and each videotape is 15 minutes long.

Part I - Record Keeping - explains the necessity of keeping accurate records of shelter functions. Sample forms are provided.

Part II - Sanitation and Cleaning - demonstrates the most effective methods for shelter cleaning. It was taped at the Fairfax County (Va.) Animal Shelter.

Part III - Field Services - stresses the importance of professionalism and proper technique in animal handling and pickup.

The videotapes feature Phyllis Wright, HSUS director of animal sheltering and control. The series is believed to be the first use of video technology for training animal shelter personnel.

For further information, write SHELTER SENSE, HSUS, 2100 L St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

The HSUS 1978 Annual Conference will be held October 12-14 at the Hyatt Regency, Dearborn, Michigan.

Workshops of special interest to SHELTER SENSE readers will include: Animal Control, Euthanasia, Investigations, Improving Your Newsletter, Techniques for Humane Society Management and Establishing a General Accounting System for Humane Societies.

Presenters will include HSUS director of investigations Frantz Dantler and investigator Phil Stewart, HSUS News editor Charles F. Herrmann and HSUS animal control specialist Phyllis Wright. The program also includes a talk by Dr. Michael Fox, noted author and lecturer on animal behavior.

For complete information, write HSUS Conference, 2100 L St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

There are two kinds of animal stories that will get good media coverage. One is the sweetly sentimental puppy, kitty or bunny tale, and the other is the shocking expose of animals suffering and dying.

The story that is difficult to tell is the daily nitty-gritty of keeping dogs happy and out of people's hair. No one wants to hear about Mrs. Smith's petunias being dug up or Mr. Smith losing sleep because of a dog barking. But these are the problems animal control must attempt to solve most often.

Before one can educate the public through the media, one must educate the media itself. Television reporters are often young and usually have mostly city experience. They are under a great deal of pressure to get a lot of stories from new angles in a short time. They prefer to interview "on location" with a background that illustrates the story, but they can't allow more than half an hour or so for the actual shooting.

Stories are not scheduled until the morning of the day they are shot and if some exciting story breaks before they get to you, they may not show up.

The best way to establish rapport with TV people is to work up a clear, interesting angle, invite them to do a story on it, be available at their convenience, and come through with some vivid information.

If you can make a statement that has a little humor or a twist to it, you are less likely to hit the cutting room floor...

Facts and figures are good in small doses if you can illustrate them. For instance, a good way of illustrating how many pups can be prevented over a period of seven years, by keeping one female from breeding is to use dry lima beans and count them out by generations.
If you start with a batch of four pups, half of them female, becoming fertile at six months and coming into heat every six months thereafter, the total in seven years will be 4,372 dogs -- about five pounds of beans.

If you can make a statement that has a little humor or a twist to it, you are less likely to hit the cutting room floor when a taped interview is edited. Try something like: "Buy your dog a labor-saving device: a spay operation!"

Some of the hardest problems are lack of time, interviewers who cut you off before you tell the whole story and interviewers who over-edit what you say to the point of distorting your meaning. You are entitled, even obligated, to call the interviewer to account if he is unfair. Media people are not sacred or perfect.

In addition to news and feature interviews, you may also have the chance to be on a television or radio talk show where listeners at home use the phone to participate. Two skills are necessary to run this gauntlet. The first is the ability to predict what questions will be asked and prepare good solid answers, maybe making notes of statistics or other resources.

The second is concentrating on each question as it is asked, discerning what the person really wants to know and answering in a clear, useful way. Nothing costs you more points on a show of this kind than misunderstanding a question or giving an answer that has nothing to do with the issue.

Educating the public through the media means educating the media people themselves. Don't wait for them to come to you -- go to them. Go with facts and illustrations and ideas you can justify.

Be honest with them, but also consider good timing and tactful presentation. Work at building personal friendships and a reputation for reliability and credibility with media people.