

## LETTERS

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2020 LEGISLATURE

## GET IT DONE

## SPAY &amp; NEUTER



Dr. Kim Freeman, left, from Gruda Veterinary Hospital in Santa Fe, and Dr. Nellie Goetz, right, from the Santa Fe Animal Shelter, work to spay and neuter dogs during a free four-day spay, neuter and shot clinic near the Mesita Village's Laguna Public Safety Department in Laguna Pueblo.

## The average cost to spay or neuter is \$100

BY SHARON BICE  
VICE PRESIDENT, SPAY-NEUTER COALITION OF  
NEW MEXICO

Which scenario is better?

A low-income family not being able to afford to spay or neuter their dog or cat and the dog/cat gets pregnant — more (money) for food for mom and litter resulting in a financial hardship on the family.

Or this situation becomes unaffordable, so in desperation, the mom and/or litter is dropped off at the shelter or worse, turned loose — family loses a beloved pet or community gets a potentially dangerous stray.

Or as taxpayers, we demand our state invests in low-cost, accessible spay/neuter for these families.

Intake numbers of unwanted pets and strays decrease, and we keep families and their pets together.

Eventually, we won't need to spend roughly \$51 million (annually), largely from taxpayer dollars and also from donations to rescues to try to "save them all," ultimately euthanizing 20,000-plus pets and transferring out more than 30,000, mostly to Colorado.

According to information extrapolated from Animal Protection of New Mexico's new Shelter Survey, we in New Mexico spent over \$25/ per person and about \$510 per unwanted dog and cat in 2017.

The average cost to spay or neuter a dog or cat at clinics that specialize in this is less than \$100.

Why wouldn't we want to invest in a proven solution to our problem? Perhaps because people are afraid they will lose their jobs as there will not be any more dogs and cats to rescue? This is not true as four hours away there are thousands of unwanted pets needing homes in Mexico, Texas and Arizona! Instead of transferring out unwanted dogs and cats each year, why not transfer them in, if this is a concern?

If our goal is to truly help animals, we must embrace change and be a better state for them, like our neighbor, Colorado. Please call your legislators today and ask them to support Senate Bill 57. ... You can find your legislator at nmlegis.gov. ... Let's move more money to the solution and less to the status quo.

## Spay/neuter saves cash, prevents death

FOR THE past 12 years, I have worked for the city of Albuquerque as the city's Animal-Program Analyst. In that capacity, I intensely studied the performance of the Animal Welfare Department and helped create initiatives to reduce the suffering and death of animals. We gradually reduced euthanasia more than 90 percent during the years when I was engaged in this work.

Now, based on that experience and my knowledge of other programs around the United States, I can tell you that spay/neuter is the foundation of any realistic fight against the suffering, taxpayer expense and ultimately the euthanasia of cats and dogs.

Accordingly, I urge support of Senate Bill 57, now before the state Legislature, to create a spay/neuter funding mechanism.

Every year, thousands of animals are born into short lives of suffering and death in New Mexico because we have not done enough to encourage people to spay or neuter their pets. I have studied this heartbreaking reality. Tonight, in half-hidden locations all over our state, abandoned kittens will huddle outdoors, trembling from cold and fear, suffering from hunger, crying with no one to care — and they will die that way. Homeless dogs and cats will be hit by cars or ripped to pieces by other animals, and when morning comes, they will be found dead in the street by people like me — I have seen such bodies. Rough dogs, neglected and allowed to run loose, will attack our children, our elderly, our pets — I have reviewed many of these cases, a fraction of the total.

There are simply not enough homes or caregivers for the dogs and cats that are born here. Statewide, more than 20,000 animals are euthanized at animal shelters in a year's time, and it costs more than \$50 million for animal care and control services.

Please do something about it: Support Senate Bill 57.

JIM LUDWICK  
Albuquerque

## SB 57 addresses pet overpopulation

I WAS SHOCKED and saddened to recently read about a woman who was mauled to death by a dog pack on a Taos pueblo. One must wonder about how this could have happened and what can be done to prevent this horrible tragedy from happening again.

One of the contributing factors is the pet overpopulation in the state of New Mexico. Something must be done about this ongoing problem now! That is why I encourage all New Mexicans and legislators to support Senate Bill 57, which would enact a modest \$100 fee paid by pet food manufacturers for each registered product of dog and cat food and treats sold in New Mexico. This fee is expected to generate more than \$1.1 billion every year to sterilize an estimated 16,000 to 22,000 dogs and cats of income-qualified New Mexicans.

In addition to the loose/stray animal problem, this bill would save taxpayers millions of dollars in euthanasia costs for animals who end up in overcrowded shelters. It is estimated that 20,000 cats and dogs die in N.M. shelters every year. This is unacceptable, and something must be done to protect and save the lives of thousands of companion animals in New Mexico — and in rare but increasing cases,

save the lives of innocent people like the woman in Taos.

SHANNON FLYNN  
Santa Fe

## Food fee expands humane services

OUR LEGISLATORS have the opportunity to vote on one of our state's crucial issues: To pass Senate Bill 57, which will provide monies to help communities deal with the overpopulation of stray or abandoned dogs and cats. Almost anyone who has traveled in our state has witnessed stray or dead animals littering our highways. This problem plagues every N.M. community.

The current spay/neuter services that private, county and state agencies provide are laudable, but is not enough. The small fee that pet food manufacturers will be charged will augment the essential funds, which will help New Mexico become a leader in providing a humane service for our creatures who cannot speak for themselves.

LINDA DAVEY  
Former teacher and current Animal Humane volunteer  
Placitas

## Low-cost spay/neuter saves money

ONLY A FEW months ago, Fort Bayard had as many as 30 stray cats. Now that number is down to at least half due to deaths by coyotes, or distemper and other contagious diseases. But soon the numbers will be back up as kitten season is just around the corner.

One black cat appears to have a broken front paw and an abscess on his hindquarters. It's not a fun life for these animals in the bitter cold. Many are quite tame and affectionate, which suggests this has become a popular place to discard pets. Some local people, who are feeding the cats as often as they can, have little money to pay their own bills.

According to the USDA, stray domestic dogs kill 100 percent more cattle than wolves do.

Local veterinarians volunteer their time to spay/neuter clinics. Animal control officers spend time trying to capture stray pets. Shelters, funded by tax dollars, must pay to feed and house the abandoned animals that are not always adoptable and, therefore, euthanized. Our local shelters and rescues need more help. The answer lies in statewide low-cost spay/neuter services.

HB 84, which passed the Legislature in 2018, was then vetoed by the governor. This year's similar legislation would place a small fee on large pet food manufacturers and bring in an estimated \$1.3 billion a year to New Mexico for spay/neuter assistance, helping to save costs spent by cities and municipalities for animal control and shelters, by the end of the three-year phase-in period.

It does not affect prescription diets, manufacturers that gross \$3 million or less per year, or livestock feed. In states like West Virginia, Maine and Maryland where such legislation has been passed, pet store owners report the fees are so minimal that no pet food prices have risen and availability has not been affected.

New Mexico deserves this humane, cost-saving solution. Contact your state representative and state senator to urge support of Senate Bill 57 to fund low-cost cat and dog spay/neuter assistance.

SANDRA GRIFFIN  
Silver City