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Animal Population Control Study Commission

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

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Animal Population Control Study Commission

Report to the Legislature

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Section 1: Why an Aggressive Animal Control Program Is Essential to Public Health and Safety	2
Section 2: Existing Pet Population Control Programs	7
Section Summary	10
Section 3: Commission Recommendations	12
Section 4: A Description of the Animal Population Control Program	17
Goal	17
Who the Program Is For	17
What a Low-Cost Spay/Neuter Costs the Pet Owner	17
Veterinarian Participation	17
Funding	18
How Pet Owners Will Use the Program	20
How People Will Learn About the Program	20
Laws To Be Changed or Enacted	20
Grants	20
Reference Notes	21
Appendix	23

Introduction

An Animal Population Control Study Commission was established by the Minnesota Legislature in June, 1989. The duties of the commission were (1) to study the feasibility of a pilot program in the seven-county metropolitan area to reduce the population of unwanted and stray dogs and cats, and (2) to report its findings to the speaker of the house and the president of the senate in January, 1990.

This report describes the findings of the commission. The need for such a program is detailed in Section 1. The commission also considered existing programs in the metropolitan area and in other states and cities that address animal population control. The programs are summarized in Section 2. Section 3 states the commission's specific recommendations for proceeding with a multi-faceted program which addresses the connected issues of animal overpopulation and animal control. The most effective approach was deemed to be a combination of **legislation, enforcement, education, and sterilization**. Section 4 explains the program that would evolve from the commission's recommendations. Footnotes and an Appendix follow.

The commission consisted of seven members: Representative Andy Dawkins, who chaired the Commission, Senator Florian Chmielewski, Bernie Fritz of St. Paul Animal Control, Gerry Takumi of Minneapolis Animal Control, Thayer Porter, D.V.M., and public members Joe Beaton and Ellen George. This report is a consensus of these members.

Section 1: Why an Aggressive Animal Control Program Is Essential to Public Health and Safety

Animal control in our state's largest cities, Minneapolis and St. Paul, is handled within their respective Departments of Health.

According to a survey of Minneapolis homeowners conducted a few years ago, "animals running loose" was one of their top three concerns.¹ Stray dogs and cats are a public nuisance, damaging property, disturbing the peace, and threatening the health of people and their pets. The irresponsibility of pet owners and the control of those strays that are captured and impounded cost the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul nearly \$1,000,000 in 1988, a cost that continues to rise. Overpopulation had another cost as well, as shelters in the Twin Cities euthanized more than 20,000 animals in 1987.

A study of pet population control in the early Seventies, written into (SENATE) Congressional Records #5612 and #5613, estimated that, for every dollar invested in municipally operated (spay/neuter) clinics, taxpayers would save \$6.50 in reduced animal control costs over a period of ten years. This is based on interrupting the reproductive chains of dogs and, especially, of cats, whose birth rate is geometric, while our "solutions" (i.e., impoundment, euthanasia) are arithmetic - able to deal with one animal at a time.² In 1976, T.J. Sorich updated this cost savings figure at a Denver Conference on Dog and Cat Control to reflect potential cost savings of \$9.79 in future animal control costs with a \$1.00 investment in low-cost spaying and neutering.³

Due to inflation, the study just referred to estimates for 1989 that each dollar spent today on low-cost spay/neuter can lead to future animal control cost savings of approximately \$18.72 over a ten-year period.⁴ Reduced-cost surgical neutering is an important part of a comprehensive animal control program, with the potential for very favorable benefit-cost ratios. "Animal control data from areas where reduced cost program are indeed capable of significant impact in reducing the surplus dog and cat problem."⁵

St. Paul Animal Control reports that dog bites and impoundments are down significantly in St. Paul since the early 1970's due to enforcement and education aimed at responsible ownership. Brochures were created. Animal Control officers were properly trained and made aware that they are service personnel doing a necessary job. Judges, prosecutors, and politicians were educated to the serious problems of uncontrolled dogs. Fines were increased from \$10.00 to \$30.00-\$100.00.

Animal control is both necessary and beneficial. It is also costly to taxpayers. In St. Paul during the period just described, the Animal Control budget went from \$61,844 in 1972 to just under \$300,000 spent on pet control in 1989.⁶

Again, this Commission emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to this animal control problem. Together, legislation, education, enforcement, and sterilization will bring maximum results.

The desired results are fewer animals killed, greater pet owner responsibility, and lower animal control costs. These costs would be much higher to taxpayers if local humane societies didn't also handle thousands of stray animals per year.

In addition, at least six other small, private humane groups accept homeless animals in the metro area. These groups sterilize all adult animals before adopting them out. In 1989, they handled between 6,500 and 8,000 animals. Their work could represent a cost savings of at least \$325,000-\$400,000 to metro area animal control.⁷

The availability of low-cost spay/neuter seems to be an important issue. Both the City of Los Angeles Department of Animal Regulation and the Vancouver, British Columbia, S.P.C.A. reported surveys showing the extreme importance of low cost in making a spay/neuter decision.⁸ This included 83 percent of dog owners and 94 percent of cat owners surveyed at Vancouver's low-cost clinic who claimed they could now afford the spay/neuter surgery.

Tucson lowered their prices for spays/neuters three years ago and the number of surgeries performed jumped from 4,000 to 7,000 a year. They also promoted a summer campaign to encourage cat sterilization by reducing fees for neutering to \$5.00. The program was so successful they kept the low price.

In the early 1980's, a referral system called Zero Pet Population Growth offered low-cost spays/neuters at four locations in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. According to one veterinarian who participated in the program, surgeries during the last year of the program totalled 3-4,000. This past year, without the program, he performed 600 spays/neuters. Using a figure stated in a Stanford University study cited by Les Ward,⁹ we can estimate that the extra 2,400-3,400 spays and neuters performed by just this one veterinarian in just that one year prevented the births of 72 times that number of animals (172,800-244,800 over a seven-year period).

In 1983, the Center to Study Human-Animal Relationships and Environments (CENSHARE) at the University of Minnesota conducted a study on animal control in Minnesota.¹⁰ The authors estimated total 1983 costs of animal control in Minnesota at \$6,154,000. They believe this figure is low, because it does not reflect the indirect costs involved. (According to the Consumer Price Index for the Minneapolis area, the 1983 cost of statewide animal control would equal \$7,315,846 in 1989 dollars.)

The CENSHARE study indicates that, statewide, more than 76,000 dogs and cats passed through animal shelters in 1983. Of this number, nearly 50,000 were euthanized,

and 1,461 animals went to research.

The study also states that 6,100 animal bites were reported statewide by animal control agencies in 1983. They estimate that 95 percent of all animal bites are unreported, thus bringing the approximate number of animal bites in Minnesota to 122,000. As the authors state, "Animal bites, and dog bites in particular, are now generally recognized to be a serious threat to public safety."

The public nuisance created by stray animals ranges from the annoying (garbage ripped open and strewn about, animals defecating in public areas or on private lawns) to serious public health and safety concerns (dog bites, rabies, and zoonoses, as well as the car accidents caused by free-roaming animals).

Dog bites are a major threat. Minneapolis Animal Control quarantined 573 animals in 1988, most because of dog bites. St. Paul reported 345 dog bites in 1988.

A number of dog bites are due in part to the uncontrolled breeding of pets. One dangerous aspect of this trend is the uncontrolled breeding of large breed dogs. Bernie Fritz, supervisor of St. Paul Animal Control, has estimated that large breed dogs constituted about one-third of the dogs his organization handled in the 1960's. Today, large breed dogs represent about 70 percent of the dogs handled by Animal Control.

This proliferation of large breed dogs means most dog bites will be more serious. Bites by vicious dogs have received a great deal of media attention in recent years, to the point where parents fear for the safety of their children and citizens who enjoy jogging, walking, cross-country skiing, skating, or any other outdoor activity worry about being bitten by an approaching stray.

Viciousness in dog breeds can often be attributed to irresponsible breeding without regard for temperament. Halting reproduction will both benefit the breed and protect residents, by reducing the number of strays and by reducing the seriousness of dog bites.

According to Dr. Randall Lockwood, Director of Higher Education for the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), there appears to be a much greater incidence of biting in unaltered animals. "Of more than twenty fatalities investigated over the last two years," said Dr. Lockwood, "we have found that none was caused by spayed or neutered dogs."

Stray dogs and cats also spread disease to other animals and to humans. The Center for Disease Control reports 255 positive cases of rabies in Minnesota in 1986. Pregnant women are warned about working in gardens or flower beds because of a disease, called toxoplasmosis, that is spread through the fecal matter of cats. Reducing the

number of stray dogs and cats will help reduce the spread of these and other zoonotic diseases. This year the Minnesota Animal Control Association will devote one entire day of their animal conference to the study of zoonoses. "It is important that we understand these diseases and how they are transmitted, not only for our own health, but in order to protect the health of the public we serve." (MACA Winter '89 Newsletter).

A letter from the City of St. Paul, Division of Public Health, states: "The Animal Control function clearly is a part of Public Health and to divorce such a critical appendage would be totally inappropriate."¹¹

Reducing the number of strays will also reduce the costs of responding to complaints and impounding these animals. St. Paul Animal Control estimates that the "activities cost" of responding to each complaint/call is \$18.

Those stray dogs or cats that are captured must be impounded, by law, for five days. The costs of impoundment include the costs to shelter, feed, and dispose of animals. Estimates of this cost range from \$50 per animal (Los Angeles Department of Regulation) to at least \$58 per animal (New Jersey Department of Health).

In the Twin Cities, Minneapolis Animal Control impounded 2740 dogs and 1841 cats in 1988, while St. Paul impounded more than 1900 dogs and 800 cats in 1987. The 1988 budgets for these animal control programs were \$627,337 in Minneapolis and \$301,520 for pet control in St. Paul. Stray animals are also impounded by local humane societies and handled by area animal rescue groups. As mentioned previously, the rescue groups alone handle between 6,500 and 8,000 animals per year.

Both Minneapolis and St. Paul Animal Control operate on funds collected from all property owners. Responsible pet owners and citizens who do not own pets pay the same as irresponsible pet owners. A major advantage of a comprehensive program addressing legislative, educational, enforcement, and sterilization issues is a reduction in costs to all taxpayers.

Before opening a municipally operated low-cost spay/neuter clinic, the city of Charlotte, North Carolina, generated a detailed 42-page service feasibility report. It concluded that increased sterilization of animals was the most effective way of reducing numbers of stray and unwanted animals, and lowering animal control costs.¹² Coupled with a significant licensing fee differential, education, and other legislative incentives, the Charlotte program has been successful, according to a phone conversation with Diane Quisenberry, superintendent of Charlotte Animal Control.

The City of Los Angeles Department of Animal Regulation estimated in a mid-1980's report that their low-cost clinic program, begun in 1971, was saving taxpayers four

million dollars annually in animal control costs.¹³ Quoting their March, 1987, Status Report, "The Los Angeles City Department of Animal Regulation has established by actual experience that a spay and neuter clinic program is an effective means of animal population control necessary to protect the health and welfare of the community. This program is feasible and a necessary function of a total animal care and control program designed to cope with a serious environmental problem."¹⁴

Growing numbers of strays mean growth in the suffering and death of these animals. One indication of the suffering stray animals endure is the fact that, in 1988, 898 dogs and cats were dead on arrival at Minneapolis Animal Control. A survey of Twin Cities metropolitan area shelters revealed that more than 20,000 dogs and cats had been euthanized in 1987. Statewide, CENSHARE estimates over 50,000 dogs and cats euthanized in 1983, the only year for which a statewide figure is known.

Without a vigorous spay/neuter program, these numbers will continue to grow. The Humane Society of the United States reports that seven dogs and cats are born each day for every one person born. It also reports that only one of every five puppies and kittens stays in a home for its natural lifetime. The other four end up abandoned or at shelters.

Animal control is an ethical, economic, and social issue that concerns all of us. Stray animals are a public nuisance. They are a threat to public health and safety. They are a million dollar expense in Minneapolis and St. Paul alone, and even that amount of money does little to affect one root cause of the problem, the growing numbers of dogs and cats being born. Stray dogs and cats are also sentient beings capable of feeling hunger, fear, and pain. To act humanely, we must better control the number of dogs and cats that will be unwanted or abandoned. The best way to accomplish this is through legislative support for animal control efforts, an educational program aimed at increasing responsible pet ownership, an effective enforcement program, and a one-county or 7-county low-cost spay/neuter pilot program, leading to a statewide program.

Section 2: Existing Pet Population Control Programs

To understand the scope of the animal control issue, it is necessary to look at the numbers of animals in the metropolitan area and in the state.

There are approximately 900,000 pet dogs and cats in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.¹⁵ It is estimated that about 68,000 spays/neuters are performed in the metro area each year.¹⁶ It is not known how many stray animals are roaming the metro area.

For Ramsey County alone, estimates are for 196,819 pet dogs and cats, and approximately 17,000 spays and neuters performed.

Statewide, the numbers are approximately 1,800,000 pet dogs and cats and 136,000 spays/neuters done each year.

Animal control in the Twin Cities metropolitan area is primarily reactive, sheltering and impounding unwanted and stray dogs and cats. The largest organizations involved in this effort are the Animal Humane Society of Hennepin County, Humane Society of Ramsey County, Minneapolis Animal Control, and St. Paul Animal Control.

The Hennepin County and Ramsey County humane societies offer spay/neuter discount certificates that help defray the cost of surgery for new pet owners. Of the unclaimed animals at the Minneapolis and St. Paul animal control offices, approximately 10 to 30 percent are adopted.

One way to anticipate the effects of a comprehensive animal population control program is to study the effects of such programs in other locations.¹⁷

Charlotte, North Carolina

Contact Person: Diane Quisenberry, Superintendent, Animal Control Division, 2700 Toomey Ave., Charlotte, NC 28203, (704) 334-9146.

Based on a feasibility study done by the Charlotte Humane Society, Charlotte initiated a multi-faceted approach to animal population control in 1982. Animal control ordinances were amended to include differential licensing, mandatory spaying/neutering of all animals adopted from the shelter, and the waiving of impound charges if the animal is spayed/neutered before being returned to the owner. Another part of the program was a low-cost spay/neuter clinic, opened by the society in January of 1982. As a result of this comprehensive program, the humane society showed a 30.2% drop in the number of stray, abandoned, or owner-released dogs brought to the shelter, and a 16.6% decrease in the number of cats, between 1980 and 1984. During this same

period, the human population of Charlotte grew 15 percent. In addition, in 1984, the percentage of sterilized, licensed animals climbed to 59%.

Los Angeles

*Contact Person: Dyer Huston, Public Relations, City of Los Angeles
Department of Animal Regulation, Room 1650, City Hall East, Los Angeles, CA
90012, (213) 485-5771.*

The City of Los Angeles opened the first public spay/neuter clinic in the United States in 1971. The availability of low-cost spay/neuter, combined with publicity, public enlightenment, and mandatory differential dog licensing, have reduced the number of animals handled by city shelters from 144,530 in 1970-71 to 80,335 in 1985-86. This dramatic reduction has occurred at a time when the human population has grown significantly (16.4% in the 1980's alone).

The City of Los Angeles Department of Regulation estimates that, without the animal population control program started in 1971, the city would presently impound 234,000 animals yearly, nearly three times the number being impounded. The department estimates that the program saves Los Angeles taxpayers more than four million dollars in animal control costs annually.¹⁸

Tucson, Arizona

*Contact Person: Jim Bassett, Executive Director, Humane Society of Tucson,
3450 North Kelvin Blvd., Tucson, AZ 85716, (602) 327-6088.*

Tucson opened a private spay/neuter clinic in 1974. The clinic, funded without government money, is open to the public. In 1974, the Humane Society of Tucson handled 25,207 animals. By 1986, that number had dropped to 14,822, despite the tremendous growth in human population in the 1980's.

Denver

*Contact Person: Robert Rohde, Executive Director, Denver Dumb Friends
League, 2080 South Quebec St., Denver, CO 80231, (303) 696-1231.*

In Denver, a cooperative program, begin in the early '70's, features sterilization by local animal shelters of adoptable dogs and cats before adoption, spay/neuter deposits paid by adopters of puppies and kittens which are returned when the animal has been sterilized, and two spay/neuter clinics in Denver and one in Boulder. The program also includes education.

The Denver Dumb Friends League handled 57,000 animals per year when the program was started. In 1988-89, they handled 28,000. The human population of Denver grew by nearly 20% in the 1980's.

Dallas

*Contact Person: Sam Rice, Dallas County Animal Shelter, (214) 670-7436;
Dallas S.P.C.A., 362 Industrial Blvd., Dallas, TX 75207 (214) 651-8029.*

Dallas experienced a 33% growth in human population in the '80's, yet the number of animals handled by the Dallas SPCA dropped. The reason is a spay/neuter clinic formed and staffed by the Dallas County Veterinary Medical Association. The Dallas City Animal Shelter gives pet adopters certificates to present to the SPCA for sterilization surgery, which is reimbursed by the city. City ordinance requires that all animals adopted must be sterilized. The Dallas SPCA handled 10,987 animals when the clinic opened in 1976. In 1988 it handled 5,962.

Chicago

*Contact Person: Jane Stern, The Anti-Cruelty Society, 157 West Grand Ave.,
Chicago, IL 60610, (312) 644-8338.*

On November 1, 1989, the Anti-Cruelty Society announced a city-wide spay/neuter subsidy program available to all pet owners. The program allows pet owners to receive a substantial savings on spay/neuter procedures performed by their own veterinarians through discount coupons. The program is funded by a bequest. It has received enthusiastic support from the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association and has been well-received by the public. In the first two months of the program, 3,300 discount coupons were distributed by the Anti-Cruelty Society Shelter.

Vancouver, British Columbia

*Contact Person: Michael Weeks, Executive Director, British Columbia S.P.C.A.,
Vancouver Regional Branch, 1205 East Seventh Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V5T 1R1
CANADA, (604) 879-7011.*

The Vancouver Spay/Neuter Clinic opened to the public in August, 1976. In that year the number of animals destroyed at the B.C.S.P.C.A. was 80,000 and increasing by about 10 percent per year. In only seven years of the clinic's operation, the number destroyed was reduced to 8,986, a reduction of 88 percent.

In addition to the savings to Vancouver taxpayers, the clinic helped reduce dog bites by 54 percent, reduce cruelty cases by 61 percent, increase the number of animals claimed

and returned to their homes by 30 percent, and reduce the number of dead animals removed from roads by 80 percent.¹⁹

New Jersey

*Contact Person: Annette Hirsch or Bob Monyer, State of New Jersey
Department of Health, Division of Community Health Services, CN 364, Trenton,
NJ 08625, (609) 984-3400.*

In 1984, New Jersey passed a law allowing economically disadvantaged pet owners to have their dogs and cats examined, immunized, and spayed or neutered for \$10. With the program's success, proponents realized that it could have even greater impact if more people could participate. In 1986, a law was passed extending the eligibility for participation in the low-cost spay/neuter project to any resident who adopts a dog or cat from a licensed, non-profit shelter or pound, if the animal has been properly licensed and had the required vaccinations. For residents not eligible for these programs, New Jersey established a low-cost spay/neuter clinic. All of these programs are funded by a \$3.00 surcharge on licenses for unaltered animals. Dog licensing is mandatory in New Jersey.

The New Jersey program has been well-received by the public. It has the full support of humane organizations and the New Jersey Veterinary Medical Association. The most recent bill passed both house of the legislature unanimously and in record time. Although it is too early to measure the benefits of the program, thousands of animals have been sterilized every year since the program's inception.

Section Summary

Comprehensive, multi-faceted animal population control programs effectively cut costs to taxpayers, contribute to public health and safety, and improve the humane treatment of animals. Whether it's --

- ...saving \$4,000,000 annually in Los Angeles;
- ...reducing dog bites 54 percent in Vancouver;
- ...reducing the numbers of stray or unwanted animals from 30 percent in Charlotte to 40 percent in Tucson to 45 percent in Dallas to 50 percent in Denver; or,
- ...reducing the numbers of animals destroyed by 53 percent in Los Angeles and 88 percent in Vancouver --

a program combining legislation, education, enforcement, and sterilization works.

Without such a program, the problems associated with pet overpopulation will worsen because many pet owners will not have their dogs and cats sterilized. The New Jersey

Board of Health estimates that most people who have had their animals spayed/neutered through the New Jersey program would not have had them sterilized without the program (based on sample phone surveys and feedback from participating veterinarians). According to HSUS, most low-cost spay/neuter clinics report that the people who utilize their services say they would not get the spay/neuter done otherwise.

Another key issue is education. According to HSUS, publicity and education make a big difference in elevating public awareness. One intensive publicity campaign in Los Angeles resulted in 11,000 spays/neuters performed in one month. Successful animal population control programs attribute their success to public knowledge, acceptance, and utilization of the programs.

The People's Animal Welfare Society, a nonprofit organization in Toronto, offers these suggestions for a successful program:

1. low-cost spay/neuter services available to all;
2. pet license fee differential;
3. make the spaying/neutering of animals as affordable as possible;
4. an aggressive public education program;
5. end pet shop sales of "puppy mill" animals; and,
6. all pets sold at municipal pounds must be spayed/neutered.²⁰

The Commission supports a multi-faceted approach to reducing animal overpopulation and pet owner irresponsibility. Animal control is a necessary element in this equation.

Newark (New Jersey) Animal Control reports a 45 percent drop in dog impoundments from 1984 to 1988. This can be attributed to the availability of low-cost spay/neuter and to mandatory differential state licensing for dogs. Newark's experience with cat impoundments is entirely different - up 36 percent during the same period. Cats are not licensed by the State of New Jersey, although it is being considered.

This experience reflects a growing national problem. Cats have recently become more popular than dogs, yet misconceptions about cats requiring little care and needing to be outside result in animal control problems, problems that can only be solved through a comprehensive effort involving legislation, education, enforcement, and low-cost sterilization.

Section 3: Commission Recommendations

Based on Minnesota's situation and the types of programs that have succeeded elsewhere, the Animal Population Control Study Commission recommends either a one-county or a 7-county metro area pilot project leading to a statewide program featuring low-cost spay/neuters for all residents, encouragement of responsible pet ownership through extensive publicity and education, and legislative changes to laws that would hinder the effectiveness of the program and enforcement capabilities. The program would be under the jurisdiction of the Department of Health, as it is in the State of New Jersey. The following are key elements of the program:

A pilot program in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, containing the same elements as a statewide program, could be the first stage of this program. The pilot program as well as the entire statewide program would be funded either through a general appropriation or through a tax on pet food and pet supplies (perhaps 1/2% statewide for the metro pilot project, increased to 1% statewide when the program expands to the whole state).

The program will be open to all Minnesota pet owners, since pet owners are funding the program through taxes. A lower copayment fee for economically disadvantaged residents may be considered, using as a guideline New Jersey's list of "entitlement programs."²¹

If a one-county pilot program is preferred, Ramsey County is suggested. One potential funding source for this program might be a motel/hotel tax.

Sterilization surgeries will be performed in existing facilities by licensed veterinarians. To participate in the program, veterinarians will perform these surgeries according to a reduced rate schedule.

Aggressive publicity and educational campaigns will increase public awareness and participation in the program.

State registration of dogs and cats will be mandatory, as will rabies vaccinations and the sterilization of shelter animals adopted.

Two statutes that interfere with the operation of the program will need to be changed.

A full description of the program is provided in Section 4. To establish this program, the Commission makes the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Low-cost spay/neuter surgeries will be available to all residents of the 7-county metro area during the pilot project, or to all Minnesota residents for a statewide program. Another option is a one-county pilot project in Ramsey County.

Officials at a spay/neuter clinic operated by the Vancouver Regional Branch of the B.C.S.P.C.A. report that most of their clients bring their animals to the clinic because of the reasonable cost of surgery not available elsewhere. This experience is common for those areas that offer low-cost spays/neuters. Cost is a major reason people don't sterilize their animals, and the availability of low-cost spays/neuters is the main reason these programs have been successful in Los Angeles, Dallas, Tucson, and New Jersey.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Minnesota Department of Health will act as fiscal agent for funding and operation of this program.

In a letter dated January 16, 1990, Daniel J. McInerney, Jr., Deputy Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Health, "... the Department of Health would be in a position to assist in this effort by serving as a fiscal agent between the Legislature and a legislatively specified grantee. Responsibilities of the grantee would need to be specified in law. The details of this could be worked out as the initiative is worked out."

RECOMMENDATION 3: The program will be funded either by a \$767,000 appropriation to the Department of Health, or by a statewide tax on pet food and pet supplies. A Ramsey County pilot project would necessitate less funding, proportionate to its population.

If a statewide tax on pet food and supplies is preferred, this source of funding is fair and equitable because it collects money from pet owners to be used solely to help improve animal control and reduce animal suffering, yet it does not impose a financial hardship on any pet owner. The average cost to Minnesota pet owners would be \$.80 per year per pet owned if a 1 percent tax were imposed.

The Minnesota Department of Revenue estimates that a 1% statewide tax of pet foods and supplies levied over fiscal years 1991-92 would generate \$3,238,193. This makes approximately \$1.6 million available for the program each year. Therefore, a 1/2% statewide tax on pet food and supplies would generate an estimated \$800,000 each year.

One funding possibility for the Ramsey County pilot project would be a hotel/motel tax (a one cent tax would raise approximately \$325,000).

RECOMMENDATION 4: Those veterinarians who wish to participate in the program will perform spay/neuter surgeries at a predetermined schedule of rates.

Most metropolitan area veterinarians already discount their fees in cooperation with local humane society spay/neuter discount programs. Veterinarians have shown a prior and present willingness to make spay/neuter fee reductions.

The reduced price currently under consideration for a 7-county pilot project will represent 85 percent of the current average fee of \$66.75 for the metro area. These average fees were determined through a preliminary survey conducted by Keith Friendshuh, DVM, Board of Animal Health. Based on this preliminary survey, the proposed rate schedule would be \$59.50 for a cat spay, \$35.70 for a cat neuter, \$72.25 for a dog spay, and \$59.50 for a dog neuter. The average surgery cost to the program would be \$56.75. The final fee schedule will be set by the Animal Population Control program.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Sterilization surgeries will be performed in existing, licensed facilities approved by the Animal Population Control program.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Information on local pet laws, responsible pet ownership, and the advantages of spaying/neutering pets will be distributed to adopters and to the general public.

Humane societies, animal control agencies, the M.V.M.A., and other humane organizations have information available on these subjects.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Education about responsible pet ownership and publicity of the spay/neuter program will be aggressive.

Public awareness is critical to the success of this program, as is the desire to be a responsible pet owner. Campaigns could include such things as a highly-publicized spay/neuter hotline or the utilization of proven programs such as "Be a PAL" (Prevent A Litter), developed by HSUS.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Rabies vaccinations will be mandatory for all pet dogs and cats.

Statute 346.51 needs to be strengthened to mandate rabies vaccinations for all pet dogs and cats to protect human and animal health. This is presently an "after the fact" law with only a minor penalty attached. To promote compliance with a state registration system, veterinarians will be required to report all rabies vaccinations to the Minnesota Board of Health. This will include a program for self-certification intended for people who raise livestock.

RECOMMENDATION 9: In cases where licensing is not required, 7-county or state registration of dogs and cats will be mandatory.

State registration assists animal control and helps in identifying stray animals, particularly those causing public health problems. This means more pets are returned to their owners, who can be educated about the threat to public health caused by stray animals, and it means fewer pets are destroyed.

A registration fee sufficient to cover costs will be determined by the Animal Population Control Program. The Animal Population Control Program will also develop a database to serve as a clearinghouse for animal registration.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Only registered, locally licensed and properly vaccinated animals will be allowed to participate in the spay/neuter program.

This is necessary to support responsible pet ownership. In the beginning, impounded pets that have not been sterilized may be released to their owners if they are spayed/neutered immediately. The owner pays for the sterilization and the Animal Population Control Program pays the impoundment costs.

To help improve animal control, grant proposals for funding will be accepted by the Animal Population Control Program. A grant pool will be created by the copayments of participants in the spay/neuter program. This pool, which will be the fiscal responsibility of the Department of Health, is estimated between \$100,000 and \$200,000 in the metro pilot program. Decisions on grant awards will be made by a committee of the Animal Population Control Program, including representatives from the Minnesota Animal Control Association.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Spay/neuter of adopted shelter animals will be mandatory.

Six states currently require that dogs and cats adopted from shelters or pounds be spayed or neutered, or that a deposit must be collected from the adopter. In Minnesota, this deposit could be \$20.00, which would allow the pet owner to participate in the low-cost spay/neuter program.

RECOMMENDATION 12: SF 1016 should be enacted.

This bill, authored by Senator Decker (also HF 134 - Representative Tunheim) would allow counties to regulate dogs and cats without implementing licensing.

RECOMMENDATION 13: Remove monetary limits in Statute 343.11.

This law limits the amount a county or city can appropriate to animal control to \$4,800 or 50 cents per capita. The limit could inhibit a county's or city's ability to properly fund animal control.

RECOMMENDATION 14: The program will include procedures for halting the funding of low-cost spays/neuters if funds are depleted.

New Jersey has such a process in place, although it has never been needed.

RECOMMENDATION 15: Statistics relating to animal control will be kept by the Animal Population Control Program.

New Jersey has a sample reporting form available. Maintaining statistics on the program will help monitor progress and suggest improvements.

Section 4:

A Description of the Animal Population Control Program

The following description reflects the findings of the Commission. This description may change as the Program is refined and enacted, and is appropriate for either a seven-county metropolitan pilot program or a statewide program.

GOAL: The goal of the Animal Population Control Program is to reduce the number of unwanted or feral dogs and cats in the Twin Cities metropolitan area or in Minnesota. As a result of achieving this goal, we hope to experience decreases in:

- the number of dog bites and rabies cases;
- public complaints about dogs and cats;
- the number of stray animals;
- the number of animals that must be sheltered;
- the number of dogs and cats that must be euthanized;
- the cost to taxpayers of animal control.

The target for the spay/neuter portion of the Program is 10,000 sterilizations in the metro area, proportionally less if a Ramsey County pilot project is preferred.

WHO THE PROGRAM IS FOR: Low-cost spay/neuter surgeries will be available to all metro area residents. Later, when a statewide program is implemented, all Minnesota residents will be eligible.

WHAT A LOW-COST SPAY/NEUTER COSTS THE PET OWNER: The average cost of a spay/neuter in the metro area is currently \$66.75. Under the Animal Population Control Program, a pet owner will pay \$20.00 of this cost (called a "copayment"), and the program would pay the rest. If provisions are made for economically disadvantaged residents, these pet owners may pay only \$10.00 of the spay/neuter cost. Management in this fashion will demonstrate the interest in such a program and document increases in surgeries.

VETERINARIAN PARTICIPATION: Any licensed Minnesota veterinarian will be eligible to participate in the Program. To participate, veterinarians will agree to perform these surgeries at a reduced rate - 85 percent of the going fee. Approval of veterinarians, and perhaps of their surgery facilities, will be handled through the Animal Population Control Program. In the metro area, the average fee for spays and neuters

combined is \$66.75, according to a survey by Keith Friendshuh, DVM, Board of Animal Health.

Statewide, the going rate for spays/neuters, as stated in a March, 1989, report by the Minnesota Board of Animal Health, is \$38.75 for cat neuter, \$66.25 for a cat spay, \$66.25 for a dog neuter, and \$81.75 for a dog spay.²² These figures are averages for the entire State, taking into account the lower outstate prices and the higher metro area prices. The Animal Population Control Program may decide to utilize two different fee scales to more accurately reimburse veterinarians, based on the cost-of-living index. According to a January, 1989, report entitled "Statewide Cost of Living Differences," the cost-of-living index is 100.0 for the metro area and 89.2 for outstate Minnesota.²³

FUNDING: The Program may be funded through an appropriation to the Department of Health, under whose fiscal jurisdiction it will fall, or through a statewide tax on pet foods and supplies. A 1/2% tax could fund a pilot project in the metro area; a 1% tax would fund a statewide program.

Careful accounting methods will determine how many surgeries per year can be performed. Procedures will be created to temporarily stop the program before it runs out of money.

BUDGET

INCOME	7-County Metro Area	Statewide	Ramsey County
Annual Tax Revenues (or General Appropriations)	(1/2%) \$800,000.00 (\$767,500.00)	(1%) \$1,600,000.00	
EXPENSES:			
(Averages as determined in the March 20, 1989, fiscal note by the Board of Animal Health.)			
Average cost of surgery (85% of \$66.75=\$56.75)*	\$567,500.00	\$1,135,000.00	(22% of 7-County figures) \$124,850.00
Education, publicity, and administrative costs	\$200,000.00	\$400,000.00	\$44,000.00
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$767,500.00	\$1,535,000.00	\$168,850.00

*Funds from public copayments will go into a fund giving grants to area animal control agencies (depending on which program is implemented) to improve their effectiveness through education as well as through traditional animal control efforts. Fiscal agent responsibilities will be retained by the Department of Health, but final decisions on grant disposition will be made by the Animal Population Control program, perhaps in conjunction with the Minnesota Animal Control Association. We recommend that the Animal Population Control program report to the Department of Health who received grants and how much, and state their goals for this program. We also recommend review of this process after three years.

HOW PET OWNERS WILL USE THE PROGRAM: The mechanics of this process will have to be worked out as the Program is implemented. However, one way it may operate is for pet owners to buy a spay/neuter certificate, at a cost of \$20.00 (or \$10.00 if this lower copayment is made available to the economically disadvantaged), when they adopt an animal at a humane society or municipal shelter. Spay/neuter certificates would also be available through the Animal Population Control office for those pet owners who already have pets or who get their pets from other sources. The pet owner then takes the certificate to any veterinarian on a list approved by the Animal Population Control Program. The veterinarian performs the surgery, then redeems the spay/neuter certificate for payment from the Animal Population Control Program.

HOW PEOPLE WILL LEARN ABOUT THE PROGRAM: Publicity will be diverse, widespread, and ongoing. Television and radio public service announcements will be produced and offered to metro area/state media. Newspaper advertising will be used, as will advertising at bus stops, libraries, veterinarian offices, shelters, and pounds. The goals of the publicity will be to make the public aware that the program exists and to inform pet owners how they can take advantage of it.

Another method of promoting the Program is to send information about it with tax statements or utility bills. This has been done successfully in San Diego.

LAWS TO BE CHANGED OR ENACTED: Only registered, locally licensed and properly vaccinated animals will be allowed to participate in the Animal Population Control Program.

To protect human and animal health, rabies vaccinations will be mandatory for all pet dogs and cats.

Mandatory registration or licensing of all dogs and cats will assist in animal control and will help in the identification of stray animals, leading to more pets being returned to their owners and fewer pets being destroyed.

It will also be mandatory that dogs and cats adopted from shelters or pounds be spayed or neutered. Finally, SF 1016/HF 134 should be adopted, and the monetary limits of Statute 343.11 removed to clear two obstructions to effective animal control.

GRANTS: As part of the comprehensive program proposed by the Commission, grants to local organizations to increase the effectiveness of their animal control efforts would be available through the Program. Guidelines for these grants will be determined.

Reference Notes

- 1 Page 9, "Table 5: Concerns About Neighborhood Conditions, 1987," Minneapolis Homeowners 1987, City Planning Department, 210 City Hall, Minneapolis, MN 55415.
- 2 Page 1, study by Dr. Carl Djevassi of Stanford University, described by Les Ward in "The Role of Low-Cost Spay/Neuter Clinics in the Control of Stray and Unwanted Animals," Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship, 1984, 10 Queensferry Street, Edinburgh, EH2 4PG.
- 3 Page 214, Proceedings of the National Conference on Dog and Cat Control, February 3-5, 1976, Denver, CO.
- 4 Based on Consumer Price Index figures for 1972-1989, received from the Southdale Public Library, (612) 830-4933.
- 5 Page 217, (see Footnote #4).
- 6 Budget figures received from Budget Office, City of St. Paul.
- 7 Based on an estimate of impoundment costs of \$50 per animal from the Los Angeles Department of Animal Regulation, and \$58 per animal impounded from Annette Hirsch, New Jersey Department of Health.
- 8 Pages 5 and 40, Les Ward study (see Footnote #3). Also see page 10 of "Spay/Neuter Service Feasibility Report for the City of Charlotte" (North Carolina).
- 9 See Footnote #3.
- 10 "An Epidemiologic Study of Animal Control in Minnesota," William D. Forbes, James Van Etten, DVM, and Robert K. Anderson, DVM, MPH, in Community Animal Control, May/June 1987, pp. 12-27.
- 11 February 1, 1990, letter to Animal Population Control Commission from Frank Staffenson, Environmental Health Director, City of St. Paul Department of Community Services, Division of Public Health.
- 12 Pages 11-12, "How To Establish Spay/Neuter Programs and Clinics," Companion Animals Section of The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L Street N.W., Washington, DC, 1985.

- 13 Page 12, "How To Establish Spay/Neuter Programs and Clinics."
- 14 Status Report: Spay and Neuter Clinic Program, prepared by the City of Los Angeles, Department of Animal Regulation, Room 1650, City Hall East, Los Angeles, CA 90012.
- 15 Based on formula from the Minnesota Department of Health, Statistics, approximately 36% of the total population constitutes the number of households in that area.

The Pet Food Institute (1107 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 857-1120) furnished estimates that 37% of households own a dog, and 30% of households own a cat.

Pet Business magazine reported a survey by the American Pet Products Association stating the number per household of pets owned at 1.58/household for dogs and 1.93/household for cats. Taken from Spring 1989 issue of newsletter of the Animal Humane Society of Hennepin County.
- 16 Based on a phone survey of St. Paul Veterinary Clinics by commission member Ellen George and legislative aide Pat Hill, Fall 1989.
- 17 "Information on Selected Spay-Neuter Clinics and Programs," The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L Street N.W., Washington, DC 20037, 1987.
- 18 "How To Establish Spay/Neuter Programs and Clinics," (see #4 above).
- 19 Page 7, "The Politics of Animal Control," (see #3 above).
- 20 Pages 22-24, "The Politics of Animal Control."
- 21 See 1983 New Jersey law P.L. 1983, Chapter 172, approved May 4, 1983; 1982 Assembly No. 1917.
- 22 Fiscal note for HF 982, by Keith Friendshuh, DVM, Board of Animal Health.
- 23 "Statewide Cost of Living Differences," January 1989, Program Evaluation Division, Office of the Legislative Auditor, State of Minnesota.

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