

Why Spay/Neuter your Pet?

She waited patiently, legs tucked beneath her body. She had long ago given up hope of her family coming back for her, and for a while thought that people walking by her cage would see how happy she was to see them and would take her home. Finally, she gave up hope entirely and just waited to see what the next day would bring besides someone giving her food and water, and maybe petting her head. She missed that most of all, and wondered what she might have done to cause her family to so thoughtlessly abandon her.

The little gray cat was to be a “forever” member of the family, but her owner did not get around to having her spayed; consequently, she gave birth to kittens when she was still a kitten herself, just 7 months old, then was surrendered to the shelter with them. Her family didn’t want the inconvenience of dealing with her and her babies. She cried when they were taken from her as soon as they were able to eat solid food. Now she waited alone. In the background, she could hear dogs barking, and the sad, soft meows of other unwanted cats like her who also faced a lonely, frightening, unknown future.

It was the middle of “kitten season”. Groups of cute, playful kittens, including her own, awaited new homes, oblivious to the specter of death hanging over them and the other animals in the shelter. The shelter was running out of space and there weren’t enough foster homes, so soon staff would have to make hard decisions about which animals would live or die. Local shelters end up with dozens of kittens surrendered to them that will result in the homeless adult cats for the most part being forgotten, and many in the shelters will be euthanized to make room for the more adoptable kittens. This tragic scenario is played out year after year, throughout the country.

For every human baby born, 15 puppies and 45 kittens are also born. Obviously, there are not enough homes for them all. The only solution is for people to have their pets, and any stray or wild cats in their neighborhoods, altered, to help address the tragedy of pet overpopulation. Cat Rescue, Adoption & Foster Team will help coordinate trapping, transporting and spay/neuter of cats and kittens. They work closely with the Bend Spay & Neuter Project – BSNP (617-1010) and SNIP Clinic in Prineville (447-6444) which offer low-cost spay/neuter services for companion animals. A pet cat can be altered for \$40. A mom cat and her kittens can be altered for a total of \$40. However, no cat will be turned away regardless of the owner’s ability to pay. Stray, “barn” or feral cats can be altered by donation.

Payment arrangements with the clinics for surgery for dogs can be made, and pit bull breeds may be altered free.

Loaner humane traps are available through CRAFT and BSNP, and volunteers may be able to help with trapping and re-homing of wild or stray cats so they don't end up in the shelters, only to be euthanized because they are considered unadoptable. It is the fault of heartless, irresponsible people that animals end up in this tragic situation, leaving it up to other, caring people to try to make it right.

We are blessed to have these groups active in our little communities – most cities, even large ones, do not have anything like them. Please do not ignore the tragedy unfolding around you right now. Be a responsible pet owner – have your animals altered. Even if you are able to find homes for your pet's litter, others that are just as deserving will lose their chance at life because there aren't enough homes. If you have a farm or ranch and can adequately provide for barn cats to give them an opportunity for a new life, they are available to you at no cost – already altered and vaccinated.

Be compassionate. Adopt a companion animal – but when you do, truly make it a lifetime commitment – don't throw them away like they mean nothing because you have to pay an extra deposit on your new rental home, or your life gets too “busy”, or you don't want to pay for your pet's medical care, or it is no longer young and “cute”. Volunteer your time at the clinics or adoption events, or help with trapping and placement. Foster a cat or kittens. Set an example for and involve your children, who have an innate connection with animals. Contribute time, supplies or money to the groups that work so tirelessly to get the local animal population under control. Encourage local shelters to make it easier for people to have their pets altered.

It may already be too late for the little gray cat, but there are countless others – homeless, abandoned and vulnerable – that have no choice but to depend on the kindness of people like you.

Bonnie Baker, Founder
CRAFT