**The Crisis Moment: Why Spaying and Neutering Can Save Lives**

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There`s no question that puppies and kittens are one of the most adorable sights on earth. It’s the same with all baby animals - they’ve got the big eyes, big feet, and floppy bodies that we’re hard-wired to find charming - but there’s something different about puppies, with their squirming eagerness to play, and kittens, which seem confident about their exalted place in life even when they can’t walk in a straight line. It’s easy to see why so many people want their dog or cat to have even just one litter, but the overpopulation crisis could see many of those adorable tiny animals sentenced to an unloved life. Even if you find homes for them, the health problems associated with careless breeding could make their lives painful and short: hardly the fate you want to assign to the helpless, trusting little animals you’ve helped bring into the world. By spaying and neutering your pets, you can do your part in making sure that every pet is loved, happy, and healthy.

**The Pet Overpopulation Crisis**

Every 11 seconds, a healthy, adoptable dog or cat is put down in an American shelter. This amounts to 2.7 million a year. (To put that into perspective, the largest city in Texas - Houston - has a population of 2.1 million people.) In Texas, the number [stands at about 700,000 a year](http://thln.org/?pageID=F9367424-3048-7B4D-7B7B2E8E22B5012B). This is a tragedy, and a crisis, but “crisis” also means a turning point in history. Many of these beautiful animals started out their lives as the offspring of family pets - maybe their litter was planned, maybe it was an “accident”, but the prevention of that litter would have still prevented the unhappy end of an innocent life.

There are other reasons for the crisis, such as puppy mills, but part of why these puppy mills are accepted is that pet breeding is seen as simple and easy. If your neighbor’s dog had puppies and they turned out fine, why inquire about the breeding history of that adorable golden retriever puppy you see in the pet store window? Unfortunately, golden retrievers are prone to [a long list of genetic defects](http://dogcare.dailypuppy.com/common-medical-problems-golden-retreivers-3773.html): hip and elbow dysplasia, allergies, eye disease, heart disease, and joint problems, among others. Breeding your family’s healthy, beloved golden retriever may result in “purebred” puppies, but those puppies may end up with serious health problems, and some of them may be bought to use in puppy mills, where the problems will end up being passed on to yet another generation.

**Now You Know Why - Here’s How**

Even if you believe that spaying and neutering is the right answer, you might be held back by a number of issues. Some people feel that neutering their pet takes away their “manhood”, or might be “traumatizing”. Rest assured that animals have [no sense of parenthood](http://www.foundanimals.org/pet-spay-neuter/myths-and-facts) like we do, and very few animals’ even notice that anything has happened aside from the itchy stitches. Another common problem is the price - depending on your vet, the cost (particularly for spaying dogs) can be prohibitive. You might put away a little money each month, but in the meantime - whoops! - your pet might slip out and end up a mother or father anyway. Pet insurance can be one way of [handling the cost of their health care](http://www.quotezone.co.uk/pet-insurance.htm), since it can help reduce the sticker shock of both elective and emergency medical bills. Look around for the best plan for your pet, since some breeds (or pets with pre-existing conditions) might have higher premiums depending on the company.

If you don’t have the money for pet insurance or to neuter or spay your pet, or if transporting your pet to the vet and back is difficult for you because of mobility issues, the [Haven Hope for Animals Fund](http://havenacs.org/) was created with you in mind. Thanks to a $100,000 donation from Dr. Brenda Wilbanks, the Haven started the program on February 14, 2013 to help cover the cost of spaying and neutering pets, as well as to help transport pets belonging to the elderly and disabled. If this sounds like something that might help you keep your pet from contributing to the overpopulation crisis, please read more about the fund and contact us to see what we can do.