



Companion Animal
Fact Sheet #1

FUND FACTS

HIDDEN HOLOCAUST: THE OVERPOPULATION CRISIS

KILLING THE SURPLUS:

Up to ten million healthy animals are killed in U.S. pounds and shelters every year. The killing could easily be prevented by spaying and neutering.

THE HARSH REALITY

Euthanasia is the single largest cause of death for dogs and cats in the U.S. Each day an estimated 70,000 puppies and kittens are born (25.5 million a year). Six to ten million, we classify as "surplus" and kill. These numbers *do not* include the millions of dead dogs and cats whose bodies we scrape off the streets, or the hundreds of thousands of abandoned, severely neglected or abused ones who never make it to our shelters to be counted and killed. The six to ten million figure represents those we "must" kill because they are unwanted. Most of these animals are young and healthy; in fact, it is estimated that a majority are less than one year of age.

The problem is simple: we have too many dogs and cats. Too many for the too few homes available. The solution we have opted for is to kill the extras. This solution has been considered acceptable by default, as though there were no other way to control the crisis. And we spend over \$600 million every year destroying "man's best friend."

THE CAUSE

No single segment of the public can be blamed for dog and cat overpopulation; overall responsibility is shared by many groups. The source of the problem includes accidental matings, purposeful breeding by those hoping to sell the offspring, and "personal" reasons like, "I want my children to experience the miracle of birth," and "I feel it's unnatural to castrate my male."

IRRESPONSIBLE GUARDIANS

Animal guardians who do not spay and neuter are the greatest single cause of the companion animal tragedy. Many of these "owners" have no intention of breeding their animals, but it happens. Some, on the other hand, want their children to "experience the miracle of birth," but don't think about the results of letting their animal have "just one litter" – the tragedy of death.

Simple arithmetic illustrates how "just one litter" contributes to the mass killing: Two dogs breed. Six offspring are born. The six offspring reproduce within one year, and are responsible for

six offspring each. In one year a litter of six can become 36. And unfortunately, it doesn't stop there. At the end of ten years just one unaltered dog can be responsible for 4,372 births. One unaltered cat can be responsible for 420,000 kittens in just seven years!

PET SHOPS AND PUPPY MILLS

Puppy mills are a major contributor to the dog overpopulation crisis. The demand for certain breeds encourages the continuation of these mass breeding facilities that whole-



This dog was one of the lucky ones who died in a humane shelter rather than on the streets. Here caring shelter workers administer a fatal injection of sodium pentobarbital.