

AgNews



DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
2320 South DuPont Highway, Dover, DE 19901

To: Newsroom Directors and Assignment Editors

For Immediate Release: **Contact** **Anne Fitzgerald**
November 14, 2008 **800.282.8685 (DE only)**
 302.698.4520
Number of pages: 2 **302.242.4092 (Cell)**

DDA Spay/Neuter Program is underway Income eligible residents are urged to apply

On November 14, the Delaware Department of Agriculture and the Spay/Neuter Program's Performance Review Committee officially launched the Delaware Spay Neuter Program with events at Windcrest Animal Hospital in Wilmington, the Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA) in Dover, and the Delaware SPCA in Georgetown. At the events, speakers discussed the need for a Spay/Neuter Program and gave a brief overview of the program.

Income eligible residents are urged to apply to have their pets spayed or neutered at a reduced cost of \$20.00 that must be paid with a cashier's check or money order payable to DDA. For the Spay/Neuter Program, the eligibility requisites are:

- (1) a person must be an adult (18 years or older); and
- (2) be a resident of the State of Delaware; and
- (3) be the owner or keeper of the cat or dog being spayed or neutered by a participating veterinarian or the Kent County SPCA and shall:
 - a. establish proof of being a recipient of one (1) of the following programs:
 - Food Stamps
 - General Assistance
 - Medicaid
 - Social Security Disability (SSD)
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
 - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
 - WIC; and
 - b. establish further proof of identity through photo identification.

Income-eligible Delawareans may apply for spay/neuter assistance for their animals as follows:

DDA Spay/Neuter Program
2320 South Dupont Highway
Dover, Delaware 19901
Phone: (800) 282-8685 (DE only)
 (302) 698-4500
Fax: (302) 697-6287

Senator Patricia Blevins and Sen. Colin Bonini, Spay/Neuter legislation sponsors, attended the events and offered their on-going support for the program. Sen. Blevins said, "I have always been concerned with animal welfare

-More-

issues and was pleased with the opportunity to sponsor HB 425 in the Senate and shepherd it through the legislative process. This program will definitely reduce the rate at which dogs and cats are euthanized in Delaware."

In reference to the legislation, Senator Bonini said, "HB 425 is one of only a very few fee increases that I have supported during my tenure in office. Spaying and neutering animals is the answer to over-population and will help reduce animal cruelty."

Regarding the need for a Spay/Neuter Program in Delaware, Kathy Gallagher, Chair of the Spay/Neuter Performance Review Committee, said, "The problem of overpopulation and abandonment of companion animals is not unique to Delaware. It is estimated that four to five million pets are euthanized annually in animal shelters across the country, and countless more suffer and are killed needlessly because they are abandoned by their owners. National studies have shown that euthanasia is not the most humane, nor is it the most cost-effective means of dealing with the pet over-population problem. Delaware's euthanasia rate is 16.4 per 1,000 people."

Gallagher continued, "The national average for euthanasia per 1,000 persons is 14.8. During the seven-year period, 2002–2007, Delaware's primary animal shelters impounded nearly 138,000 animals; of those, 79,000 were euthanized. The Delaware Spay/Neuter program will prove to be the single most effective method to reduce impoundment/euthanasia."

The spay or neuter procedures will be performed by Veterinarians and/or Animal Hospitals that opt to participate at a private practice or a participating 501(c) (3) non-profit clinic program that have agreed to the fees established by the Coordinator and the Committee.

Dr. Heather Hirst, State Veterinarian, said, "I am sure that as taxpayers in these tough economic times you are interested in how the program is funded. Initial spay/neuter funding assistance came from an appropriation of \$50,000. This money was used to fund the pilot phases. Beginning in July 2008 (Fiscal Year 2009), program funding comes from the Spay/Neuter fund that was established on September 1, 2006 with a \$3.00 surcharge on all rabies shots administered in Delaware on or after September 1, 2006. The program is therefore essentially self-funding. Fund money is being used in accordance with the legislation with 75% directed toward low-income pet owners and 25% directed toward free-roaming cat/dog spay/neuter. The coordinator's salary also comes from the fund."

The celebratory nature of the events was set by Murrey Goldthwaite, Executive Director of the Kent County SPCA, who said, "This is a great day for Delaware animals, animal welfare agencies and the community statewide! I want to commend all those animal groups of the Attorney General's Task Force, who put aside their differences one October day in 2005, sat at our tables at the Kent County SPCA and started to draft the initial legislative proposal and within a few months brought about this piece of Delaware history for animal welfare. I would like to add that it has been a pleasure to work with the committee members and with the Department of Agriculture. I want to give a big thank you from all animals and the shelters' rescue and foster staffs everywhere to former Secretary of Agriculture, Michael Scuse, for taking this project on.

###