



CHICAGO VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

100 Tower Dr., Ste. 234, Burr Ridge, IL 60527 Phone:630/325-1231 Fax:630/325-4043 Email:cvma@chicagovma.org

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CVMA POSITION ON MANDATORY SPAY/NEUTER

WHEREAS, in the State of Illinois, only licensed veterinarians are legally allowed to perform the medical/surgical procedures of ovariectomy/ovariotomy and orchiectomy, which are also known as "gonadectomy" or "sterilization" and also customarily regarded as "spaying and neutering/castration", the intent of which is to render an animal incapable of reproduction, and which are currently mandatory surgical procedures for shelter owned and stray animals, and customarily regarded as elective procedures for individually owned pets; and

WHEREAS, in the State of Illinois exists a valid "veterinarian-client-patient relationship" as defined in the Veterinary Medicine and Surgery Practice Act of 2004, which includes the following, "Veterinarian-client-patient relationship" means: The veterinarian has assumed the responsibility for making clinical judgments regarding the health of an animal and the need for medical treatment and the client, owner, or other caretaker has agreed to follow the instructions of the veterinarian"; (225 ILCS 115/3) (from Ch. 111, par. 7003); and

WHEREAS, graduated and licensed veterinarians have the most complete medical knowledge of the benefits and detriments associated with elective "gonadectomy" and can provide the best counsel to clients in that regard; and

WHEREAS, there is inconclusive evidence regarding the behavioral influences of early neutering for dogs both with and without a history of behavioral problems; and

WHEREAS, there are conflicting reports regarding euthanasia rates and animal control costs in communities that have enacted mandatory spay/neuter legislation; and

WHEREAS, the passage of ordinances that strike at easy targets such as law-abiding, responsible pet owners does little to address the issue of irresponsible pet owners, who will undoubtedly continue to operate outside the legal system and where enforcement will be dubious in our already overburdened animal control system.

Notwithstanding existing requirements for shelter owned animals, for these and other reasons, the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association regards the decision of whether an animal should be spayed/neutered or not to be a medical/surgical decision that is ultimately best determined between the veterinarian and the individual pet owner.

Other municipalities have had success in reducing euthanasia and animal control costs with programs of: (1) public education, (2) leash laws, (3) free or low cost spay/neuter opportunities for low income families, (4) moderate price differentials for licensing of intact and altered male and female dogs and cats, (5) vigorous marketing of shelter dogs and cats for adoption by the public, (6) foster care, (7) off site adoptions and (8) working with rescue groups.

Rather than instituting "blanket" mandatory spay/neuter laws; we, the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association, believe that the residents of the City of Chicago would be best served by an aggressive public education campaign to promote responsible pet ownership, as well as, the enactment and enforcement of the strictest penalties for irresponsible animal owners.

Signed,

Shannon Greeley, DVM

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CVMA President 2008