



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

[Pets for Life]

PETSMART
Charities



VIII Effective Spay/ Neuter Outreach

"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion.
If you want to be happy, practice compassion."
—Dalai Lama



Making Spay/Neuter Affordable and Exciting



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Research shows that cost is a primary barrier to people getting their pets altered. If possible, we recommend providing spay/neuter packages, including vaccines and pain medication, for free.

For many people, even “low-cost” spay/neuter is out of reach. Sometimes people schedule an appointment, sincerely believing they will be able to pay for it by the day of the surgery. When that day arrives, they don’t have the money and the surgery cannot be completed. Due to embarrassment or fear of cancellation fees, they often don’t call to explain the situation.

Most clinics are very familiar with no-show appointments, but rarely is the dynamic behind these missed appointments understood. Although most clinics cannot give away all services, consider all the strategic benefits of offering free surgeries to some clients. For some people, it is the only way they can afford it, and it makes it much simpler to talk about with owners, especially those unsure about having the surgery done. Regardless of your personal position or opinion about offering some services for free, your target audience is more likely to accept the service if there is no-cost.

Many donors will be excited about the opportunity to help another family prevent pet overpopulation, and clients who can afford low-cost surgeries may be willing to contribute to the co-pays of others. For more information on fundraising, see Chapter 13.

Positioning Spay/Neuter to Your Audience

It’s up to you to make receiving free spay/neuter exciting, special, and enticing. Remember, this is a demographic that is likely unfamiliar with the benefits of spay/neuter. We encourage you to use spay/neuter “vouchers”—not a voucher in the typical sense, but a tangible representation of the surgery and the financial value associated with it. So, when you say, “I have a free spay/neuter voucher,” you have a physical item to share that can be viewed as essentially giving away cash. Print these vouchers on sturdy paper and promote them by explaining they are just like gift cards; they’re worth a certain amount of money and are redeemable at the spay/neuter provider. The vouchers themselves don’t need to have meaning. When the pet owner presents them at the time of surgery, they can be used to track completed appointments or discarded. The key is to use the voucher to start conversations and to create recognition of and connection with the value of a spay/neuter surgery.

A common misconception is that people will not value free services. We find this couldn’t be further from the truth. Once you’re in the community and start meeting and listening to pet owners, you experience that most people care about their pets and are extremely appreciative to receive services and resources.

Spay/Neuter Voucher

IN LOS ANGELES, 58,000 PETS ARE PUT DOWN EVERY YEAR.	THIS VOUCHER IS VALID FOR	<u>\$90</u>	OFF
	YOUR NEXT SPAY/NEUTER APPOINTMENT.		
	Name	<u>Firstname Lastname</u>	
	Telephone	<u>555-123-4567</u>	
	Address	<u>123 Main Street Anywhere</u>	
	Appointment Date/Time	<u>Tues. Oct. 15 2013, 9 a.m.</u>	
mromero@humanesociety.org • 888-837-3193 Surgery Location: 5550 N. Figueroa Street, LA 90042			





Beyond appreciation for the services, people are truly grateful to know someone cares enough about their pets to come into their neighborhood, listen to their needs and concerns, and provide assistance without asking for anything in return. Providing that unconditional support elevates the value of the pet to that person.

After your community assessment, you'll see that your neighborhoods of focus are homes to many pet owners living in poverty and struggling to make ends meet. Not having the financial means to seek out and pay for medical care does not mean those services aren't wanted or appreciated.

In addition to spay/neuter, free vaccinations, such as rabies and parvo/distemper, are of great value to pet owners living in under-served communities. Offering them at community outreach events and in your spay/neuter package, if possible, helps pet owners significantly in regard to caring for their pets.

Research has shown another common barrier to spay/neuter, in addition to cost, is insufficient engagement on the topic. The PFL program is grounded in personal engagement on the topic of spay/neuter as a part of a pet's overall wellness. Another notable barrier to spay/neuter is access. To address this, outreach teams should have a plan for transportation of pets as needed. More detail on transport planning is at the end of this chapter.

Both PetSmart Charities and The HSUS conducted extensive research with owners of unaltered pets through phone interviews, surveys, focus groups, and in-person visits to figure out how to produce higher spay/neuter rates and reach the target audience (people with unaltered pets) through traditional marketing and more recently with the launch of PFL, embedded community outreach methods.

Pets for Life 2014 Data Report

PetSmart Charities Attitude, Usage, and Barriers

Pets for Life 2012 Data Report

Make it FREE: We recommend giving away spay/neuter for free and not asking for a co-pay in most, if not all, situations in your focus area. Your audience is more likely to accept the service when it's free. It also keeps the conversation much simpler during outreach. Make the offer as compelling as possible: "Today we are offering free vouchers! If you sign up today you don't have to pay anything!"

Make it fit: The HSUS's PFL program has had success with vouchers that are essentially the size and shape of a dollar bill. Again, it is a good idea to explain the voucher's value: "This voucher is worth X dollars—it is basically cash." Tell owners to hang on to it by putting it in their wallet or purse with the rest of their money because the voucher is how they will "pay for" their spay/neuter service. This approach places real value on the voucher so people take it seriously.

Although we discourage using income qualifications, if you must require it in order to provide people with reduced prices or free services, try to make the process as simple and non-confrontational as possible. When preparing qualifications for financial assistance, your goal should be to screen out people of higher income. In doing so, be careful not to create barriers or circumstances of embarrassment for those who do qualify. Being poor does not mean being devoid of pride. You want to make spay/neuter easy, accessible, affordable, and a possibility for everyone who is interested.

Not only is providing free services very important for the pets who are most at risk of being bred (intentionally or by accident), but in some cases, incentives may be needed to help persuade reluctant pet owners.

One of the most common areas where an incentive-based program can be useful is with the dogs who are most commonly bred for status or anticipated profit. Although you should not explicitly state that the incentive program is focused on these specific dogs, you can use the program to attract them. A very successful incentive-based program is fence building. Learn more about this project by viewing a guide on how to build a fence and other information on The Coalition to Unchain Dogs' website.

Other less labor-intensive incentive programs are package deals, such as including a new leash and collar or some other "gift" with the surgery. You can create a VIP program where the person receives a VIP card offering a free nail trim twice a year, free flea/tick preventative during the summer months, or other resources available to you in your community. Try to persuade some of your collaborative partners (such as groomers or pet supply stores) to offer discounts as part of a VIP package. People love to be VIPs, and when there is an added value to spay/neuter, the likelihood of participation is much higher and news of the program will spread by word of mouth. Moreover, when you have an ongoing program of this kind, it builds long-lasting relationships with people and their pets, which have immeasurably positive outcomes for both groups.

➤ How to Build a Fence



➤ *Dog being signed up for free spay/neuter services after having multiple litters due to the owner's lack of finances and access*





Broaching the Topic of Spay/Neuter



 Tim Freeman,
Jon Littlepage,
and DeAndre

Whether conducting outreach in your neighborhood of focus, or working the line at a community outreach event, start by approaching the person with a smile and introducing yourself. Do not immediately ask, “Is your dog/cat spayed or neutered?” Engage in conversation and put the person at ease. Ask what the pet’s name is, and ask if you may say “hi” to the animal. This will usually put the owner, the pet, and you at ease.

An interaction with the pet usually jump-starts the owner into conversation about the pet, which should make it easy for you to engage and begin absorbing details about the owner’s life and the pet’s lifestyle.

This type of dialog can help you identify concerns and problems that might exist. Owners’ issues with their animals are often related to their pets being unaltered, making it easy to introduce spay/neuter into the conversation. Not everyone you meet will have a pet or will want to discuss spay/neuter at that time. However, if you are friendly and genuine, it is likely they will direct you to people who do, will contact you if they change their mind, and will share your information with people they know. When you are at the point in the conversation where you ask if the pet has been spayed or neutered, do it in a way that is nonchalant—do not make it a huge production.

You can expect the conversation to go something like this:

- If an owner says that the pet is spayed or neutered, then congratulate and thank them. Let them know about local low-cost spay/neuter services in case they, or someone they know, needs the service in the future. This is important because many referrals of people with unaltered pets come from a friend, family member, or neighbor.
- If an owner says that the pet is not spayed or neutered, let him or her know your organization is giving out vouchers for free spay/neuter services to people who need them. With many pet owners, all you have to do is mention that the service is free, and they’ll be appreciative and happy to take a voucher.

Once a person agrees to spay/neuter, fill out the voucher, hand it to the pet owner and remind them to keep it safe because it’s like cash. If possible, call and set up an appointment with a spay/neuter provider on the spot, using any open slots you reserved for this purpose. Otherwise, let the pet owner know you’ll be contacting him or her within the next 24–48 hours to set up an appointment. Be sure to thank them for talking with you.

- If an owner says that the pet is not spayed or neutered and they are not interested in the surgery, begin asking questions to determine the best way to respond. The following list includes some common reasons you might hear and suggestions for how to respond. Keep in mind that you might be unsuccessful at convincing some pet owners during this stage, and that's okay. Some people need to think it over, and many will eventually make the decision to alter their pet, so always stay positive and give people information to consider for later.

One of the basics of marketing is a person needs to hear a message multiple times before it is internalized and action is taken. Take into consideration that people might need to be positively engaged on the topic of spay/neuter multiple times before they decide to have it done.

The key is to make people feel comfortable after the conversation has ended. Never make owners feel like they were backed into a corner on the spay/neuter decision. It's their decision to make, and they are more likely to make a favorable spay/neuter decision when they feel in control. Do not underestimate the reputation you'll build and the impression you leave with people when you're respectful and kind.

Keep in mind that while a pet owner may not want to have that particular pet altered, he or she may have another pet at home or know people who have pets that they want altered. At a minimum, you have created another community ambassador who knows about spay/neuter resources. Always remember that if someone says "no," you have not lost everything. You have nothing to lose by engaging the person on the topic, but if you don't start the conversation, that person might not ever change his or her mind.



 Annie Pruitt and Devell Brookins (1)

 Annie Pruitt and Devell Brookins (2)



 Stephan Parker and Annie Pruitt

When talking with pet owners about spay/neuter, acknowledge people's thoughts or feelings about why they haven't spayed or neutered their pets. They may have strong reservations on the subject. The following list includes common reasons for not altering pets, along with responses you can give:

1.

"My pet is an indoor pet and never goes out," or "If my pet goes outdoors, he's on a leash."

When you are doing outreach and discussing spay/neuter, you may hear that a pet is an indoor pet so spay/neuter is not necessary. If the owner is truly managing any contact with other animals, there is little impact on animal overpopulation. However, spay/neuter may still provide health benefits for the pet, and there's a chance the owner could make a slight mistake—a dog breaks free from his leash, a cat slips out the door, etc.

For a male cat: Even if you plan to keep your cat indoors at all times, there is a chance that he could get out—you know how curious and smart cats can be. Plus, it will eliminate that annoying, awful-smelling "spraying" that your cat does, and who doesn't want that?

For a female cat: I understand, but this will be helpful in reducing the "crying" and "pleading" sounds your cat makes when she's in heat. I know this can be annoying.

For a male dog: I understand, but if your dog gets out or loose just one time, he could run to find a female—it literally only takes seconds to make puppies. Male dogs can sense a female in heat up to two miles away, and since you plan to keep him inside, he might try to escape to follow his instincts and drive to mate. This could be devastating, he could get hit by a car, get lost, end up in the wrong hands, or be picked up by animal control. I know you want to keep him safe, and one of the best ways to do that is to have him neutered. Also, male dogs who remain intact have a much greater risk of testicular cancer. You can prevent this risk completely by neutering him.

For a female dog in heat: It's not fun to have your dog bleeding in your house when she's in heat. Spaying will eliminate that. An unspayed dog in heat attracts unaltered male dogs. You can literally turn your head while walking your dog on a leash outside, and a male dog can come along, and the next thing you know, you have puppies in a couple of months. There are also health benefits. Spaying prevents certain types of cancers, and it keeps your dog safe from complications from heat cycles, like prolapsed vulvas and uterine prolapse, which can be fatal.

For any dog: This will likely prevent your dog from contributing to pet overpopulation, and it will save you from the burden of caring for and placing puppies. There are also some health benefits that could actually result in your pet living longer if you choose to have him or her spayed/neutered. At this point, share the appropriate health benefits, depending on the pet's gender, age, and whether it has had a litter yet.

2.

"My pet is too young," or "My pet is too old."

For a young pet: How old is your pet? Pediatric spaying and neutering is the most effective means of preventing unplanned litters of kittens and puppies. The procedure is less stressful on a juvenile patient and is an easier surgery for the veterinarian to perform. Some vets perform the procedure on pets as young as eight weeks, as long as the pet is at least two pounds. The general rule is to try to have the surgery before the first heat cycle. So we try to do it by the time the pet is four months old because it reduces so many health risks and prevents your pet from contributing to pet overpopulation.

For an old pet: If an animal is over a certain age or has particular health problems, it can be a risk to have the animal altered. In that case, cover the ways in which the owner can prevent the pet from mating and thank them for doing their part to help prevent continued pet overpopulation. A pet that is too old for surgery can often times still reproduce so be sure to share information about this possibility and how to prevent this from happening. This can be just as important and effective in preventing litters as the surgery itself. Be sure to let them know about the free or low-cost service for the future and for other pet owners they may know.



"I just want him/her to have one litter."

For a female dog: I can tell you love your dog. Have you thought about how stressful and painful it is for her to go through pregnancy and then deliver her puppies? You should also know that in some cases females suffer serious complications, and can even die when having puppies.

For a male dog: It's obvious how much you love your boy. I'm sure you want him to live as long as possible. Do you know that testicular cancer can occur in male dogs? I have a guaranteed way to make sure that never happens to your boy—if you remove his testicles there's a good chance he'll live a few years longer.

For a whole litter: Have you really added up all the costs of taking care of a litter of puppies? I know you'll love these puppies as much as you love your adult dog, and you'll want to make sure they're healthy before they go to their new home. You'll have to get them all shots and provide quality dog food and supplements. Never mind the fact you'll have to clean up lots and lots of poop. Are you ready for all that?

People sometimes get excited to have a puppy, but underestimate how much work it is. Are you ready to take a couple of the pups back if they don't work out in their new home? Not to mention that sometimes dogs can have litters of up to a dozen pups. So many dogs can be very overwhelming to care for, really hard to find them all homes, and sometimes puppies die, especially if the litters are large.

For a whole litter: I can tell how much you love all dogs, but having just one litter has huge implications. Have you ever visited your local shelter? It's packed with dogs that people bought and just didn't have the time or money to take care of. There's a really good chance that a couple of your dogs will end up there. It's really sad—most people don't realize that many of the dogs that go into the shelter system get put to sleep. I know that someone like you, who loves dogs so much, doesn't want to contribute to that, right?

If someone is determined to have one litter, make a conscientious effort to stay in touch with that person though the breeding process. Continue the dialogue when the person is struggling to care for the puppies or kittens and to find good homes for them. Being a consistent voice in the process and a sounding board for the difficult results of breeding can yield positive results and create advocates for spay/neuter.

Understanding the reasons why someone might want to have a litter can help you connect with that pet owner. You might be able to prevent the litter or ensure that the pet is altered after the one litter. Having a litter often serves as a distraction in a life of struggle and can be fun and exciting, a positive in a world of negative. We all love puppies and kittens, and the pet owners you'll meet in your outreach are no different. Looking forward to having cute puppies or kittens makes sense. And hoping to earn a little money is reasonable, even if it doesn't happen in reality. So take a step back and consider what the person's life is like when you're not around, what the person might think and feel with the information they

have (and without the information you have about dogs and cats dying in shelters). You are much more likely to achieve a spay or a neuter if you put yourself in that person's shoes and see the situation from their perspective.

4.

"Is it going to change his/her personality?"

For a male dog: It can actually help your dog be a little calmer and focused so you can do some cool training.

He will be the exact same cool guy, but now he probably won't run away as often to look for a "girlfriend." Do you know how many male dogs take off looking for a mate and get hit by cars? Dogs can smell a female in season up to two or three miles away.

For any dog: Do you have friends with dogs? Wouldn't it be cool to let them play and walk together? Dogs who are fixed almost always get along better with other dogs.

I know you love your dog and don't want him/her to be stressed out and frustrated. When you spay/neuter, it really helps your dog chill out because he won't always be thinking about finding a mate and making puppies.

The only thing that will change after you spay/neuter your dog will be that you'll have a healthier, happier friend who will live longer, and that's pretty cool.

5.

"I just don't have the time."

For any dog: Taking care of a dog is a lot of work. All the more reason not to make more dogs that you have to take care of, right?

For any pet: You don't have to worry about finding the time. Let me know what works for you and we'll take care of it. We've got you covered. How about I set up the appointment and arrange transportation to and from the appointment. What do you say?

6.

"I can't do that to my boy (me)."

For some pet owners, the idea of neutering their male pet seems to be very personal, so much so that male owners of male dogs have expressed that the thought of it makes them feel almost as if it's happening to them. Talking through the benefits can help prevent this projecting and clarify the important reasons for having the surgery.

For a male dog: I can tell you love him. You know, if we take care of those testicles, there's a good chance he'll live a lot longer, and you won't have to worry about him getting testicular cancer.

You do realize that if we neuter your dog, you still get to keep your balls, right? The both of you will still be as cool and macho as ever. I promise. (Using humor can make a potentially awkward conversation a lot lighter, but be sure to know your audience to avoid making anyone uncomfortable.)

I promise, he won't be mad at you. He'll still be your best friend. And he'll probably be with you even longer because he won't run off trying to get to a female several neighborhoods away or across busy streets.

7.

"Oh no, I wouldn't think of it. God intended for animals to procreate."

For any pet: That may be true, but I'm sure God didn't intend for so many animals to suffer due to overpopulation. New puppies or kittens take the homes of other dogs and cats already in the shelter, and those dogs and cats will likely have to be put to sleep. I don't know of a God who would want that outcome.

8.

"It's not natural."

For a dog: Neither are orphaned puppies. Since there are so many puppies born each year, shelters are overpopulated and stray dogs suffer. That isn't natural either. By having <pet's name> fixed, you can make sure you don't have puppies who will suffer.

For any pet: I understand what you're saying but you could also say that having a dog or cat as a pet isn't natural either. But since you love your pet and want the best for him, hopefully you'll consider having him fixed so he will be with you longer. Nature kicks in when a female is in season and this can sometimes cause roaming. Dogs and cats often get lost, or worse, hit by a car. This is the sad result of nature calling.

9.

"I can't afford it. Isn't it expensive?"

For any pet: It can be expensive but there's a low-cost spay/neuter clinic with licensed veterinarians who will perform the surgery for less than \$100 in most cases. We will help pay for that. We can make it free for you if you set up the appointment within the next couple of weeks.

10.

"I have no way to get to the vet. I don't have a car and I can't take my pet on the bus."

For any pet: I completely understand. If you're interested, we can help get <pet's name> to and from his or her appointment.

If you'd like, there is a van that picks up pets at the community center down the street every other Thursday. We can set up an appointment and make a reservation to have your pet picked up and dropped off in that parking lot.

11.

"Haven't thought about it."

For a female dog: Well, it's always a good idea for female dogs so that they don't accidentally become pregnant by neighborhood males and leave you caring for all of the puppies and finding them homes.

For a male dog: I hope you'll consider it for your boy. It will reduce the chance of him getting testicular cancer or running off and possibly getting lost or hit by a car trying to get to a female in heat.

For any pet: I'd like to share a little information while you think about it. In <your town/city> XX,XXX

pets are put to sleep every year because of pet overpopulation in our community. By getting your pet fixed, you're not only setting a great example to others, but you're ensuring that your dog's puppies don't end up in the shelter where they might not find homes and have to be put down.

12.

"I want to have puppies to make money."

This is a conversation you'll have frequently. Patience is crucial. This scenario gives you a chance to address several spay/neuter issues. Remember that a litter of puppies (and the potential for financial gain) represents hope to people who often don't have a lot of positivity in their lives. If the client is determined to have this litter, refrain from judgment or frustration. Instead, offer advice, get contact information, and let the client know that you'll follow up periodically to see how it's going. In the following weeks, stay true to your word and maintain contact. If possible, start a dialogue that allows the client to examine the cost of breeding/selling puppies through a more critical lens. This honest dialogue helps the client realize that the reality of financial reward rarely, if ever, lives up to expectations.

When people come to this conclusion on their own, they're more likely to embrace it and become valuable messengers to others who are considering breeding. There is no single response that leads every client to decide to spay/neuter, but there are a few things to try.

For a female dog: Have you ever added up how much money you'll spend to take care of all the puppies and the mom while she is pregnant and nursing—food, shots, dewormer, vet care, vaccinations, etc.?

Have you thought about how much work it is to take care of so many puppies? Some dogs can have up to 15 pups. That is a lot of feces, and takes a lot of time and energy.

I hope you don't like to sleep; those little pups will wake you up all night!

For a litter: There are a lot of people out there selling puppies or even giving them away. The economy is in rough shape, so what will you do if you cannot sell them?

As a business person, think about supply and demand—how many people do you know who are breeding dogs? (The answer is usually "lots of people.") If the market is saturated, the price is lowered and demand is spread out, making it difficult to make money. In fact, the possibility of losing money is very likely.

I know you love dogs and will try your best to find them all good homes. Even if you find good homes, it's almost impossible to keep in touch with all those people, aside from your friends and family, especially as time goes on. People move or they give dogs to friends and family. I bet that if you followed the lives of every puppy your dog had, the majority of them would end up in the wrong hands, in a shelter, or dead.

Do you have a plan if someone wants to return a puppy to you, like a legitimate breeder would? Where will you keep it? How will you feed and care for it?

What is your plan if any of the puppies are born with expensive health issues?

As a dog lover who knows how bad the overpopulation problem is, think about the simple math. If you have 10 puppies and each puppy has 10 puppies, that's 100 dogs in one generation. Do you know 100 good homes that will treat the dogs you brought into this world kindly?

For any dog: If you really are able to make money from breeding, then your dog has a street value, which means that there's an increased chance of your dog being stolen. (This is a common occurrence in some communities). Your dog is at risk unless he/she is altered.

General topics and talking points

In the above scenarios there are a few common themes. The following general topics and talking points are not specific to any one conversation, try to familiarize yourself with all of them.

Overpopulation: You'll often discuss the issue of overpopulation. This is a very important and effective topic. For many owners, the realization that their one unaltered pet contributes to the deaths of thousands of others persuades them to get their pets sterilized. There are many ways to make this point. Describe to people how one unaltered dog or cat can become hundreds or thousands very quickly. Point out that although the client cares for his or her pet very much, he or she has no way of controlling how the dog's puppies or cat's kittens will be treated by someone who may take one on an impulse. Too often people take puppies or kittens because they're attracted to the puppy/kitten-hood without really thinking about the work involved with caring for a dog or cat into adulthood.

Explain many puppies are born because of their one unfixed dog will likely be "put down" at the shelter or without a home. Be mindful research shows many people from under-served communities are less familiar with the term "euthanize". The term "killed" has been found to be unfavorable and can vilify shelter staff. It's best to use the words "put down" at first, then slowly alternate with the term "euthanize" to introduce this language as it relates to pet overpopulation and crowded shelters. While on the topic of shelter conditions, it can be helpful to discuss how difficult it is for shelter staff to put down large numbers of dogs

and cats. Don't forget to mention the untold number of animals who suffer every day in the streets.

When using this rationale, it's important to know the number of dogs and cats euthanized at your local shelter, if possible. Share this number and point out how the client's decision directly affects that number. Mention the lack of good homes available. In an open and honest conversation, many people will express they don't actually know many good homes, and this realization might encourage them to stop and think.

Health Benefits: The health benefits of spaying and neutering are somewhat disputed in the veterinary field, but it's important to be able to speak of these accurately and honestly. Familiarize yourself with the following information so you can share it with pet owners.

The link below is a handout from the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association (HSVMA) on the benefits of pediatric sterilization. It explains why it's advantageous to sterilize puppies and kittens and why it's beneficial to spay and neuter animals in general. There's also a linked copy of an article from the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association (JAVMA) that provides an overview of the effects of sterilization on cats and dogs. Below the links are a few quick facts from the article about cancer, tumors, and diseases (prostate and pyometra).

 [Pediatric Age Sterilization \[HSVMA\]](#)

 [Sterilization on Cats and Dogs \[JAVMA\]](#)

Mammary Tumors: Overall, the risk of developing mammary gland neoplasms (which occur in older animals) is seven times greater for sexually intact dogs and cats than altered dogs and cats.

Testicular Tumors: Testicular tumors are the second most common tumor type in dogs, with a reported

incidence of 0.9%. Castration completely eliminates this risk.

Prostate Disease: Benign prostatic hypertrophy-hyperplasia is a common disorder in sexually intact male dogs. By 2½ years of age, half of all sexually intact dogs have evidence of prostate disease.

Pyometra: Pyometra occurs in between 15–24 percent of unsterilized dogs. Sterilization eliminates the risk of this disease. Pyometra is a fatal infection of the uterus that's most commonly seen in female dogs, and occasionally in female cats.

Attached is a brochure from the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) that provides a basic overview of why it is beneficial to spay/neuter cats and dogs.

 [Spay and Neuter Brochure \[AVMA\]](#)

Licensing: If you have differential licensing in your area, use that as a selling point. For example, if a license for a sterilized pet costs only \$10, while a license for an unsterilized pet costs \$75, that's a big difference. Therefore, the free service you are offering will save money for the client.

Build Relationships

There are so many reasons to spay/neuter. Every person is different, it may take many different explanations to persuade one person, while another person may be moved by a single explanation.

No matter the situation, focus on the relationship with the client. It might seem counter-intuitive, but one of the keys to successful spay/neuter conversations is actually to not constantly focus on spay/neuter. If you focus instead on building positive, trusting relationships with people, the spay/neuter conversation comes naturally and more easily.

Remember that many of the people encountered will have no history or point of reference for spay/neuter, so be patient and explain the benefits carefully. The more welcoming and common we make the spay/neuter procedure, the more relaxed and accepting people will be.

Be sure to engage everyone. People without pets and people who are not ready to spay/neuter can still share the message of spay/neuter. You never know who might be a strong advocate or ambassador for spay/neuter. There could be someone in the community who doesn't have pets but who is highly respected and who is happy to share information on your program and services. A person who is not ready to spay/neuter his/her own pet might still see the benefit of it for others and tell friends, family, and neighbors about what you have to offer. Remember that a person who declines spay/neuter isn't necessarily breeding his/her pet. There are many people who aren't ready to spay/neuter but who also don't want to breed, so make sure to engage these pet owners on how best to avoid accidental litters.

In order to bring about transformation in your community, you have to become a trusted and familiar source of information and services. For the under-served audience, life is often a struggle for survival, and there may not be much positivity in their daily lives. When you can be a positive influence, share a cheerful attitude, and provide something of value, people respond. You'll almost always receive what you have given in kind, so go forth and promote spay/neuter.





Follow-Up for Spay/Neuter Appointments

Spay/Neuter follow-up process

The importance of follow-up calls to recipients of spay/neuter can't be stressed enough. Some of the people who say "yes" might later have questions or doubts about spaying/neutering their pet(s). This is fairly common and it's a primary reason why follow-up calls are so important.

Adhering to this process, markets implementing the PFL approach have an 89% spay/neuter completion rate overall. Two primary benefits of this focus on customer service and high completion rates are:

- [1] People and their pets do not fall through the cracks and stronger relationships are built with the clients. This results in clients spreading the word to their family, friends, and neighbors about the positive experience. It creates a conversation about spay/neuter within a community that previously had little to no familiarity with the issue. This is extremely important in obtaining sustainable change.
- [2] Spay/neuter providers can depend on the surgeries scheduled to actually show up and therefore are more likely to continue providing services (and even increase capacity as the number grows).

- [1] Voucher issued: Gift certificate type vouchers, which are about the same size as a dollar bill and includes the cost of the spay/neuter package, are utilized so clients have something tangible and know the value of the free service being provided
- [2] Client is called within 24–48 hours of receiving the voucher
- [3] Client is called within 24–48 hours before the scheduled appointment
- [4] If the surgery is scheduled more than a week out from the time the voucher is issued, the client is called every week until the surgery
- [5] Client is called within 24 hours after the surgery is completed
- [6] If at any time the client cannot be reached by phone, an in-person follow-up visit is made with the client

If the owner has doubts, remind him or her that it's their decision, and even if they don't decide to spay/neuter at this juncture, it's okay. Keep the lines of communication open and remember that they might make the decision later. If you end a conversation angrily or rudely, you've probably lost a chance to build a relationship and an opportunity to help that person and their pet at a later date.

Here's a working list for making follow-up calls:

- Start with the first name on the list.
- Call the home phone first, cell phone second (if both are provided).
- In addition to taking notes, code phone call responses as follows:
 - NA = No answer/no voice mail
 - LM = Not home/left message
 - SA = Call back to schedule appointment
 - AS = All set with appointment
 - NR = Not ready to schedule logistically
 - NI = Not sure/no longer interested

The following is a sample script

Of course, the real conversation should be organic based on information garnered as you speak. For best results, mention the pet by name and the free services as soon as possible in the conversation.

Hello, my name is _____ and I am calling to speak with Mr./Mrs. _____, about _____ [name(s) of pet(s)].

1.

If the pet owner is not home:

Do you know when it would be a good time to call back?
May I also leave a number where I can be reached?

If it sounds like the phone number isn't the best number (listen for hesitation or confusion in the person's voice) ask for an alternate phone number. Remember to mention the pet by name and that you are calling about free services.

2.

If pet owner is home:

I'm calling to say thank you for signing up _____ [name(s) of pet(s)] for free spay/neuter and to see how _____ [name(s) of pet(s)] is doing.

3.

If pet owner has an appointment set:

According to our records you have an appointment all set for _____ [name(s) of pet(s)] to get spay/neuter [or] fixed on _____ [Insert date]. Do you have any questions about transportation, the instructions for the day, or the appointment in general? Please call us if anything comes up and we'll call you again the day before the appointment to remind you of all the details for the appointment.

4.

If the appointment is not scheduled:

We have in our records that you received a free spay/neuter voucher and would like to schedule an appointment for _____ [name(s) of pet(s)]. Is now a convenient time to schedule the date?

Please tell me what days work best for you and let's see what we have available. Or
Just let me know when is a good time to call back, or I can leave my number for you to call me.

5.

If the client is not sure about surgery or changed his/her mind:

May I ask why you are unsure/changed your mind?

Listen for reasons for not wanting surgery and respond with the appropriate benefits and reasons spay/neuter is important or answer any questions the client may have about the surgery.

Make Appointment Scheduling Easy

Analyze your method for scheduling appointments and determine whether it's the easiest process for your audience. If you only provide an option to make appointments online, you'll miss clients who don't have internet access. Ideally, you should provide many options for scheduling appointments (e.g. online scheduling, calling during normal business hours, or leaving a message on the weekends/in the evening. Your clients have varied schedules and means of communication, the more options you give and the easier you make it, the more people will take advantage of your services and have a positive experience.



> Providing details on spay/neuter appointment scheduling





Providing Spay/Neuter Transportation



Cathy Wells

During your community assessment, you probably discovered that people living in your neighborhoods of focus have little to no access to veterinary care or affordable spay/neuter services. This reality, combined with the fact that most people in the neighborhood have modest incomes, may be working multiple jobs, and often do not have reliable personal transportation, makes it challenging and sometimes too difficult for them to get their pets to spay/neuter appointments. Providing transportation to and from spay/neuter appointments whenever possible will increase the completion rate of the spay/neuter you schedule.

Offering transportation to your clients has multiple benefits. The appointments made with the spay/neuter provider will be more consistently filled. Fewer “no shows” will occur because you’ll ensure that the animals get to their appointment, which eliminates the possible waste of your time and makes the spay/neuter provider happy. It makes it more difficult for the pet owners to say “no” to spay/neuter when you remove the barrier of getting their pets to and from the appointment. You are also adding additional value to the service you’re providing. When pet owners see the lengths you go to in order to help, they are very appreciative and often surprised, which strengthens your relationship. The most important benefit is that more pets will be altered, which means fewer litters will be born.

There are a few ways to implement a transportation service component to your work. Talk to your local animal shelter, animal control, or spay/neuter clinic to see whether they have a van or vehicle that is equipped and available to transport animals. If so, work out a partnership where the van comes to a convenient location in the neighborhood at a predetermined day and time. Coordinate with your clients to bring their pets to this location in the morning and pick them back up in the afternoon. This effort may require funds to cover the gas and the driver’s time; however, this usually breaks down to a minimal and worthwhile additional cost per animal. Another option is to work out a deal with a pet taxi service or similar company to provide the transportation on certain days or a set number of trips per month. This adds to the average cost of each spay/neuter surgery, but it might be necessary if the pet wouldn’t otherwise get the procedure.

The most cost-effective and ideal way to provide spay/neuter transportation to your clients is to create a volunteer program to cover it. These transporters serve an extremely important purpose: helping pets get spayed/neutered that would otherwise never be altered. The model transporter should be relaxed and kind so that the pet owners feel assured that their dogs or cats are in good hands.

Remember that spay/neuter is an unfamiliar procedure for many of your clients and they might worry and wonder whether their pets will be okay. To alleviate their concern, make sure volunteer transporters know the owners could be apprehensive or uneasy. Give them talking points for reassuring clients and instilling confidence. Having lengthy conversations or trainings with your transporters decreases the likelihood of



➤ *Providing transportation for a dog receiving veterinary services.*

them accidentally saying the wrong thing to clients. It will also minimize the frustration on their part when clients may change their minds or need additional encouragement the morning of the procedure.

Make sure your transporters fully understand the outreach and follow-up process. They should have accurate addresses and clear directions to the pick-up location, details on processes at the spay/neuter clinic, and your contact information in case of an emergency. These volunteers should be trained in safe animal handling techniques and basic animal behavior because they will likely help owners load their pets in crates. Most appointment drop-off and pick-up times will be close to or during normal work hours. Recruit volunteers who have non-traditional work hours, are students with flexible schedules, are retired, or work from home. If a volunteer is available on a single day every week or every month, ask your spay/neuter provider for standing appointments at those times and make sure there are pets to fill those spots. Identify multiple people who can work in teams, where one person does the morning pick-up and another handles the afternoon/evening drop-off. If a transporter has space to take multiple pets at a time, make appointments in groups for pets who live close

together. There is no one best way to make a volunteer transport program work. Be creative, solution-oriented, and just make it happen.

No matter which method chosen, use the follow-up plan described above. Make calls before the scheduled appointment and include details about when the transporter will arrive the morning of the appointment. If necessary, ensure that the owner will be present to sign the required paperwork. If nobody will be home when the transporter picks up the pet, have the owner sign the paperwork prior to the appointment and give it to the transporter. In addition to the paperwork required by the spay/neuter provider, have the owner sign a waiver of liability that gives you permission to take the pet (see the example below). The transporter should have already signed a volunteer waiver, as discussed in Chapter 6. It is a good idea to request proof of a valid driver's license and insurance coverage from all transporters.

 [Sample Transport Waiver](#)

 [Transport SOPs](#)

 [How to be a PFL Transporter](#)

 [Sample Volunteer Waiver](#)

Each transporter should have a crate to carry the pet in and the necessary equipment such as collars, leashes, or temporary leads. If the owner is home, the transporter should help the owner get the dog or cat into the crate, into his or her car, and have the owner sign the consent form/waiver. The transporter should be prepared to answer any last questions about the procedure, the schedule for the day, and any preparations the owner should make for the pet's return that evening. When the transporter returns the pet at the end of the day, he or she should bring



> *Volunteers organizing the transport of cats to receive spay/neuter services.*

the paperwork from the veterinarian and any follow-up medications. He/she should go over any pertinent instructions for after-care.

The above information applies to transportation services for individual clients. For more information on how to provide transportation outside of your city/county, to general areas that are not served by a low cost spay/neuter provider, or to clients who are longer distances away from a provider, please visit:

➤ [Humane Alliance: Setting Up a Transport Program](#)



