

THAT DOG NO LONGER HUNTS

According to “Maddie’s Fund” president Richard Avanzino, former executive director of the San Francisco SPCA, in the 1970s, our country’s animal control agencies were killing, on average, about 115 dogs and cats annually for every 1000 human residents. This amounted to about 24 million shelter deaths every year (This figure is still being bantered about by people wanting stronger breeding and sterilizations laws.) The Problem" of too many pets and not enough homes to go around began a huge campaign based on spaying and neutering pets. That crusade has been very successful. A 2009-2010 national pet owners’ survey by the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association reveals that the **vast majority of owned pets...75% of dogs and 87% of cats... are spayed or neutered.**

In recent years, according to Avanzino, annual shelter death numbers have dramatically declined to about *12 per thousand human residents, or about 3.6 million deaths each year.* This amounts to a staggering **85% reduction in killing since the 1970s.**² We have reached a nationwide pet shelter death rate averaging just 1.2% per population, effectively a “no kill” rate.

Feral cats and kittens account for the majority of shelter numbers⁹ but many areas have actual shortages of adoptable dogs, particularly purebreds and puppies, and must (*and should*) import from other regions to fill the need. **Dogs are being smuggled into the US by the thousands with rescue groups importing small dogs from Mexico, Brazil, the Caribbean, Taiwan and Romania,** to name some of the most popular points of origin.

The conservative estimate is that **300,000 dogs are imported into the US each year to meet the demand for pets.**³

Those figures are not put forth in the campaigns to paint all breeders of purebreds as inhumane money-grubbing killers of shelter dogs and to promote mandatory spay and neuter laws in different cities and counties. Shelters were one of the biggest suppliers of unwanted puppies and to fight that, they are asking for or actually sterilizing puppies at an early age. While that is understandable, breeders will not do this as they want to see how their puppies

develop toward the ideal standard and there are many problems that come with neutering and spaying puppies or immature dogs.

Besides carrying a somewhat high rate (around 20%) of complications such as infection, hemorrhage and even death, spaying significantly increases the rate of urinary incontinence in bitches....about 20-30% of all spayed bitches will eventually develop this problem. Studies show that the risk of prostate cancer is HIGHER in neutered dogs than in their intact counterparts and the most problematic result of early sterilization is a delayed closure of the bony growth plates. This results in an abnormal, "weedy" skeletal development that increases the incidence of orthopedic problems like hip dysplasia and patellar luxation. Working and performance dogs, if neutered before maturity, risk the inability to perform the jobs they were bred for.¹⁰ Behavioral studies show that sterilization increases fearfulness, noise phobias and aggression. Other well-documented adverse health effects of de-sexing include increased risk of bone cancer, hemangiosarcoma, hypothyroidism, and cognitive dysfunction in older pets. Sterilization confers an increased susceptibility to infectious disease, and also a higher incidence of adverse reactions to vaccines.¹⁰

Sadly, mandatory sterilization laws have been sweeping the nation and may further compromise the future of the dog fancy.(although many communities are now reversing those laws) AKC registrations continue to decline and the push to legally and/or contractually require spay and neuter of most every dog will further reduce the gene pool of purebreds in America. Given the current demand in society for healthy pets; a demand which the responsible breeders could not come close to meeting even if they wanted to...the choice we have as a society is how that demand will be filled. Many believe that only responsible people should be allowed to keep intact dogs and breed on a limited basis. However, the attempt to legally force well-regulated and inspected commercial breeders and the casual small home breeders out of the picture leaves only the unregulated, less visible "underground" producers and smugglers to fill the need for pets.

As the desire for these pets goes unfulfilled by legitimate breeders raised in humane conditions with good health care and genetic backgrounds, the money to be made breeding dogs outside our laws and illegally bringing them across borders as young as 4 weeks and in hazardous manners is growing a huge underground operation. Dogs coming into this country, both legally through shelter and “rescue” groups and illegally through smugglers or individuals are posing problems of health issues for our own pet population and poorly bred animals with no breeders to stand behind them when health problems arise. While the same groups pointing fingers at breeders for taking away homes for shelter animals with each purebred puppy they produce (and people who want good purebreds for the same reasons there are purebreds to begin with aren’t going to find them in shelters), are themselves condemning shelter animals in counties where there aren’t enough homes by importing strays from other countries rather than bringing in dogs from those shelters.

The answer to stopping the illegal import trade in puppies and people getting ripped off in foreign “sales” that never deliver is not in attacking or turning good breeders into criminals with punitive laws and fees or labeling them pariahs. Good breeders are the guardians of their breeds and their breed’s gene pool. Anyone who wants a healthy, well-bred purebred dog and qualifies as a good home should be able to buy one from an American breeder and feel good about their choice.

For full unedited article and footnotes / links to supporting information:

http://www.thedogplace.org/HEALTH/Spay-Neuter-1101_Coats.asp