



THE ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE OF ALEXANDRIA

SPOTLIGHT on animals

IN OUR 46th YEAR

WINTER 1992

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria begins its 46th year of service to the community. This is a good opportunity to thank you for your strong support of and commitment to our mission of aiding injured, abused and homeless animals.

Is your pet wearing an I.D. tag? Please see that your dog or cat always wears a collar with proper identification. If he's ever lost, you stand a much better chance of seeing him home again.

City officials tell us that their most frequent pet-related complaint is that owners do not pick up after their dogs. Please, be considerate of your neighbors. Always pick up after your pet and help keep Alexandria clean.

There appears to be no end to the terrible suffering of animals. You can continue the fight against animal abuse, even after you are gone, by remembering the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria in your will.

Last month, the League sent a year-end appeal to our good friends in the Alexandria area. If you have not yet responded, won't you do so today? Every dollar you contribute is well spent in caring for the homeless and injured animals in our care.

Are you thinking of adopting a pet? If so, please visit the Alexandria Animal Shelter. Over a thousand people in our area have enriched their lives by adopting one of our beautiful, healthy shelter animals.. The Shelter is open seven days a week, and our Shelter staff can help you to select the right pet for your family. For more information, please call 838-4775.

1991: A Banner Year for Adoptions in Alexandria

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria enjoyed its best year ever in placing homeless animals with area families. Over the past 12 months, over a thousand of these animals—an all-time record number—have found loving homes, thanks to greater community awareness and the League's ongoing humane education programs. This has added up to a 50 percent increase in adoptions over 1989. In October alone, for example, adoptions reached an all-time monthly high of 103 animals placed into new homes.

Another factor which undoubtedly has helped to achieve this success rate has been greater community access to the animals. In September, the Shelter announced expanded hours, and the facility is available every day of the year except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's.

The League has one of the most thorough and comprehensive adoption programs in the Northern Virginia area. In addition to the adoption program manager, there are three other adoption counselors who conduct home visits on every animal adopted out of the Shelter.

The numbers are encouraging to our dedicated Shelter staff and adoption counselors, but there are still many beautiful, healthy animals waiting to be placed in good, loving homes. Some of these pets are mixed breeds, others pedigreed; but all can offer your family vast quantities of a very precious commodity: Love.

To everyone in our community who has helped to improve the lives of

homeless and injured animals, thank you! If you are thinking of adding a four-legged member to your family, please visit the Alexandria Animal Shelter, and get to know some of the animals in our care. You'll be glad you did!

League Offers Low-Cost Spay/Neuter Certificates

Most local animal shelters have some type of reduced fee programs for the spaying or neutering of adopted shelter animals. The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria is unique in this regard, because it offers a low-cost spay/neuter program to individual pet owners in cooperation with many area veterinarians. Pet owners can have their pets sterilized at half the regular cost.

Obtaining a low-cost spay/neuter certificate is easy. By taking just a few simple steps, you can offer your pet a longer, healthier and happier life.

- First, visit the Alexandria Animal Shelter to survey the list of 19 participating veterinarians. Not only does this list indicate spay/neuter fees, but it also details the hours of operation and surgery hours of each veterinary hospital and fees for routine shots.

- Second, select a veterinary hospital based on reputation, location, or cost.

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AWLA Alumnus Reports Successful Adoption

We receive many wonderful letters from people who have adopted their pets from the Alexandria Animal Shelter—often complete with paw and nose imprints! Though we cannot publish them all, we hope to include an update on AWLA Alumni in future issues of *Spotlight on Animals*.

One such letter was written by "Wiggles Spot Healy," owned by Patricia C. Healy. Wiggles is a male English-springer spaniel mix who had been at the Shelter for a long time and won the hearts of the staff. Of his many endearing qualities, the most memorable was the way his entire body wiggled when you talked to him! The Shelter staff were delighted to receive this report from Wiggles himself following his adoption:

"Well, I'm at my new home now, and boy am I thrilled! I still haven't stopped wiggling I'm so happy! They've given me some toys. I have three balls plus a squeak toy, and my family laughs because I still can't believe they are my very own. I must do my 'victory dance' with my toys at

least 20 times a day—all around the house, room by room, up to the humans and back to my bed. They are so happy that I'm happy!

"My master takes me for runs each day, and sees that I have lots of doggie friends. And my mistress gives the best backrubs! She found out that the BIG SPOT on my back is to mark my favorite 'sweet spot.'

"Thanks for waiting for me.

"Love,
"Wiggles."

League Seeks Car Donation

It finally happened—our 1978 Pontiac, which was donated to the League in 1985, had become too expensive to maintain. Breakdowns were frequent and repairs were costly. We just couldn't afford it any more. That means the League no longer has a vehicle that can be used in its Humane Education and Adoption programs. And we need one!

If any of our friends can help us by donating a reliable, relatively low-mileage car, it would be greatly appreciated. Donations to the League are tax deductible. If you can help us, please call our Humane Education Officer at 838-5042.

To report suspected cruelty to animals, call (703) 838-4775

Thank You!

Our very sincere thanks go to the many kind people who responded to our annual Christmas appeal. Your generous donations are helping us find good homes for abandoned animals.

Thank you very much!

YES! I want to help the Alexandria Animal Shelter care for homeless animals. I am pleased to enclose my tax-deductible gift of \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please send your check or money order to:

Animal Welfare League of Alexandria
P. O. Box 20050 • Alexandria, VA 22320-1050

Regardless of how many ordinances are ultimately passed, what really is important is the long-overdue attention drawn to the problem of the overpopulation of dogs and cats. At last, cities and towns are being forced to face the issue and to design solutions that are workable for their communities.

Dr. Cliver practices at the Reston Animal Hospital. In October 1991, she was the keynote speaker at the League's Annual Dinner Meeting.

Photo Sessions to be Offered in May 1992

Popular pet photographer Michael Joseph will be back in Alexandria to photograph your pet on May 7 through 10.

Sittings will be held at the Alexandria Animal Shelter for a \$10 sitting fee, which is donated to the Shelter.

More details will be forthcoming in our Spring issue.



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Neutering and Spaying Your Pets

by William Kusterbeck, D.V.M.

Surgically altering animals to control reproduction goes by many names, "neutering" and "spaying" being the two most common terms. Neutering involves the removal of both testicles from a male, and therefore the removal of sperm-producing tissues. Spaying involves the removal of the uterus and both ovaries from the female. Spayed females, therefore, cannot conceive or cycle after this procedure.

A great deal of attention is paid to controlling unwanted pregnancies in our pet population. Many puppies and kittens born to stray or abandoned animals die of starvation, suffer injuries and death from car accidents, or are euthanized in animal control centers. Those that survive are often public health hazards. It is a tiny percentage of this group that ever become well adjusted.

Medically, there are health benefits for the altered animal. Males, after altering, have a reduction in the size of the prostate gland. If altered at less than one year of age, male dogs have a very low incidence of bacterial

and cancerous prostatitis in their later years. Older intact females have a high incidence of cancer of the mammary glands and uterine infection. These problems can be virtually eliminated later in life if spaying has been carried out by one year of age.

Many people believe that altered animals become fat. While it is true that metabolic changes take place

after these surgeries, overweight conditions result only because we overfeed our pets. Recently altered animals need to have their weights monitored, and their diets and exercise adjusted to maintain optimal weight and fitness. Altered animals also show fewer aggressive and roaming tendencies than their unaltered counterparts.

Pets can be wonderful, enjoyable additions to our life and the lives of our families. Responsible pet ownership must start with each of us.



Vet's Corner



St. Paddy's Day Dog Show

The Annual St. Patrick's Day Fun Dog Show is scheduled for Saturday, March 14 at Market Square in Old Town Alexandria.

The Fun Dog Show is part of the all-day Irish festivities sponsored by the Ballyshanners, a local Irish-American organization. Awards will be given to winners in each of 12 just-for-fun categories.

Everyone is invited. We'll have all the details in our next *Spotlight on Animals*.

Spay/Neuter Certificates

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- Shelter staff will prepare a low-cost certificate for you to take to the veterinary hospital. The all-inclusive surgery fee is paid directly to the League. Any hospitalization fees following surgery are paid directly to the veterinary hospital.

All veterinary hospitals require that animals be current on shots prior to surgery. This generally means that your dog or cat must have a rabies and distemper inoculation and, in some cases, a heartworm check for dogs.

In addition to the low-cost spay/neuter program, the League received in early 1991 a bequest in the will of Inez M. Hauber which provides for defraying the charges made to low-income citizens for the spaying and neutering of dogs and cats. This special fund stipulates that low-income citizens shall pay no more than \$10 for a dog or \$5 for a cat. Through Mrs. Hauber's generous support, our community's overpopulation of dogs and cats will be greatly reduced.

Call the Alexandria Animal Shelter at 838-4775 if you need more information about the discounted spay/neuter program.

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Jack Steele, President
Joyce McDowell, Editor

Spay-Neuter Ordinances Gain Momentum

by Suzanne Cliver, DVM

Sparking lots of media attention and lively debate across the country is the introduction of ordinances which mandate spaying and neutering companion animals.

The first such ordinance has been passed in San Mateo, California, and will go into effect this March. This followed months of hard work on the part of Kim Sturla, then director of the Peninsula Humane Society, and the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors Chairperson, Tom Nolan.

Under the provisions of the ordinance, all dogs and cats over the age of six months must be spayed or neutered. If an owner wishes to breed his dog or cat, he must purchase a yearly breeding permit for \$25 and pay an additional \$15 for a license for an unaltered animal. Anyone selling or giving away puppies or kittens must publish his breeding permit number. Street corner giveaways of pups and kittens are illegal.

If an unaltered dog or cat is picked

up by animal control, the owner must leave a \$35 spay/neuter deposit before retrieving the animal. In addition, a heavy fine is imposed for owning an unaltered and unlicensed animal. Upon second impoundment by animal control, the animal will be spayed or neutered before it is released back to the owner.

The weakest part of the ordinance is a provision that allows people to sign a statement that they never intend to breed their dog or cat, thereby avoiding the permit fee. Many feel that some fee should be levied against individuals who sign such a state-

ment.

One aspect of San Mateo County's ability to enforce the ordinance is its aggressive licensing program. At least 60 percent of companion animals are licensed. Veterinarians are required to submit a copy of every rabies certificate they write to animal control. Furthermore, the city employs students in the summer to go door to door selling dog and cat licenses.

Ms. Sturla, who now spearheads a national effort for the Fund for Animals which aims to solve the animal overpopulation crisis, states that there is active interest or serious efforts in every state to promote similar ordinances.

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Mayor Ticer Visits Shelter



Alexandria Mayor Patsy Ticer recently paid a visit to the Alexandria Animal Shelter. Pictured, from left, are Jan Raffaele, Jennifer Kroeger, Jen Sadler, Mayor Ticer, Shelter Director Brenda Purvis, Chris Caswell, and Linda Johnson.



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