The Myth of Pet Overpopulation

Is there really a pet overpopulation crisis?
The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) would have you believe there is a pet overpopulation crisis. Their website states: “Every day in the United States, thousands upon thousands of puppies and kittens are born because of the uncontrolled breeding of pets.” May, 2007

HSUS website http://tinyurl.com/ayvfn
HSUS tells a different story..

“There was, however, general consensus among most animal related organizations that the term pet overpopulation was not only difficult to define, but that it was also probably no longer an accurate catchphrase to describe the reasons for animals leaving their original homes, especially for dogs.” State of Animals 2001
Yet the message continues..

- Animal Rights groups continue to campaign against breeding of dogs and cats due to an “overpopulation crisis”. The public is told repeatedly “with millions of animals dying in shelters, there is no reason for any animal to be bred” – “don’t breed, don’t buy while shelter animals die”.
The call for legislation

- Animal rights groups choose to ignore facts for the purpose of framing an overpopulation issue to their advantage in the public eye in order to raise sympathy dollars and convince legislators that anti-breeding legislation is required.
Not a breeder problem

“Our number 1 problem is stray dogs and cats. This is not a breeder problem. This is an owner retention problem that requires a different solution than a population problem.”  

Bob Christiansen
Ending the myth

- There are twice as many homes available for dogs every year in the U.S. as the number of dogs entering U.S. shelters.
- There are more homes available for cats every year as the number of cats entering U.S. shelters.  
  Nathan Winograd
Truth: a pet retention problem

- Some pet owners do not have adequate knowledge to solve a pet problem
- Some pet owners have unrealistic expectations of pet ownership
- Pets, who otherwise might remain happily in their home are then relinquished to shelters across the country.
Giving up pets

- Behavior problems come in all sizes and include: escapes, too destructive, too active, too vocal
Giving up pets

Reasons include:
- house soiling, inside destruction
- doesn’t get along with other pets
- allergies
Giving up pets

- Reasons for relinquishment common to both dogs and cats include moving and landlord not allowing pets.
Giving up pets

Reasons include:

- Failure to choose a breed that fits lifestyle and needs
- Inadequate facilities for pet
Giving up pets

- Cost too much
- Zoning problem
- Owner divorce
- Health problem
- Aggressive

and the list goes on.
Different dynamics

- The dynamics for population surplus and owner retention problems are entirely different.
- There are no laws that can legislate decision making. The only viable solution to the pet retention problem is education and training.
The need for education

- People need to know more about why animals behave the way they do, and more general knowledge about the animals they take into their homes to make for successful relationships.

National Council on Pet Population Study & Policy
The need for education

“Increased education and outreach efforts by veterinarians, dog clubs and other animal-welfare groups could substantially reduce the number of dogs handled annually by shelters”  Gary Patronek, DVM
Alternatives to Relinquishment

"Instead of blaming the public for surrendering the animal, the new approach requires staff to work with pet owners and appreciate the fact that most people have legitimate pet problems and concerns.”  Maddie’s Fund
Alternatives to Relinquishment

“Even with all the time we spend counseling each individual, it's much cheaper to partner with community members on these problems than to take the pets into the shelter.” Maddie’s Fund, Project Safety Net
Educate – don’t legislate

By providing education and encouraging community support, not only will citizens have the proper tools to become responsible pet owners but future generations will also be better prepared and informed.
Education is the key

North Carolina Responsible Animal Owners Alliance (NCRAOA)

www.ncraoa.com

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