

# **Mandatory Spay Neuter & Breeding Restrictions**

Despite the fact Mandatory Spay Neuter (MSN) is a failed concept, advocates in numerous states continue to stir public opinion and press for ordinance changes.

Why is MSN a bad idea? To begin with MSN targets the wrong people – people who are already responsible and wish to breed dogs/cats – even if so-called exemptions are included in the legislation. MSN is a blanket law built on the false premise that reducing the source of animals equals reducing shelter intake.

There are no stories of success anywhere that MSN has been enacted. In fact, many municipalities have seen their intake and euthanasia rates increase following passage of such laws. In the early '90's when Fort Wayne, Indiana; San Mateo, California; and King County, Washington passed their animal control legislation, the punitive laws were hailed as a national model; however, they remain a dismal failure to this day.

Nathan Winograd, author of *Redemption*, notes in one of his many essays that if coercive legislation was effective then Long Beach CA, where MSN was carried to the extreme of a total breeding ban for 30 years, would have empty shelters or at least be No Kill. Yet Long Beach still handles thousands of animals thru animal control services every year.

Most professionals acknowledge benefits to spay/neuter of dogs such as decreased roaming, decreased risk of mammary, testicular and ovarian cancer, and population control in non-breeding animals. However, it is imperative to note the disadvantages of spaying or neutering may include diabetes, osteosarcoma, hemangiosarcoma, prostatic adenocarcinoma, transitional cell carcinoma, urinary tract infections, urinary incontinence, autoimmune thyroiditis, hypothyroidism and hip dysplasia.

MSN ordinances do not consider the physiological differences between dogs and cats. The cats' reproductive physiology requires that they either be bred or spayed to remain healthy. An ill-conceived mandatory spay/neuter regulation could force a small cat hobbyist out of existence causing irreplaceable loss of genetic diversity and conceivably the extinction of entire breeds.

Mandatory spay/neuter ordinances are intended to deter and penalize pet owners. No matter how severe the punishment, free-roaming cats with no owners will continue to reproduce on the streets adding to the feral cat population. MSN laws have no impact on the unchecked reproduction of unowned/free-roaming/feral cats - the greatest reason for shelter euthanasia.

Spay/neuter must remain a decision between the veterinarian and owner and not a government mandate.

MSN and breeder licensing laws also fail to address the problem of pet retention. It is undisputable that the number one reason for owner surrender is related to pet behavior or health problems, or the owner's lack of time, knowledge or ability to care for the pet.

The emphasis must be placed on pet retention if animal control and shelter intake is to be lowered. Pets that have been relinquished had an owner who chose not to keep them.

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Passing breeding restrictions costs the public money in the form of administrative fees, burdens animal control to enforce an unpopular law, and takes focus away from needed duties dealing with strays, abandoned animals, cruelty cases, public education, and shelter adoptions.

Breeding restriction laws would limit the options of dog buyers. Options are important to prospective dog owners because it is important for them to choose dogs that will fit in well with their lifestyles in terms of size, grooming requirements, and exercise needs. The fewer choices available to potential owners, the greater the chance that the new dogs will not fit in well with their lifestyles and expectations.

Restricting breeders of purebred dogs will not make mixed breeds from the shelter more appealing to everyone no matter how politically correct shelter adoptions are marketed to be. An elderly woman living in an apartment looking for a small lap dog, is not going to adopt an 80 pound collie/shepherd mix from the shelter if local breeders are shut down by mandatory spay/neuter laws or excessive breeder permitting.