

Making Ripples

NWA Spay and Neuter Services

by Amanda Bancroft

If your dogs or cats live outside, tend to wander, or are feral cats, the best way to continue loving and feeding them without contributing to ecosystem imbalance, euthanasia of offspring, and increased rabies and other diseases transmissible to and from wildlife and humans is to have pets spayed or neutered and vaccinated. Spaying or neutering reduces the number of roaming animals hit by cars, animals surrendered to shelters or abandoned, and reduces spraying, marking, and fighting behaviors that can lead to your pet's injury. Altered pets have an increased life expectancy of one to three years for dogs, and three to five years for felines.

For people of all income levels, the Humane Society of the Ozarks offers reduced cost spay/neuter vouchers that can be used at a clinic of your choice. These vouchers offer a surgery price of \$35 for a male cat, \$50 for a female cat, \$55 for a male dog, and \$70 for a female dog. You can call them or fill out their online voucher application form.

For low-income pet owners living in the City of Fayetteville, there is a \$10 spay/neuter program through Fayetteville Animal Services. If you live outside the city limits but within Washington County, there is a \$10 spay/neuter program through the county offered to qualifying low-income residents. Spay Arkansas is a low-cost clinic in Springdale and another great option for low-income residents. They provide a \$30 spay/neuter for cats, and a variable fee for dogs based on weight. These prices don't include the required rabies vaccination (usually five dollars).

But another great service provided by Spay Arkansas is for feral cats. Their trap / neuter / return program costs \$35 per cat regardless of your income level, and includes optional free ear tipping (an identifier that a cat has been altered so it doesn't get trapped again). It's best to return feral cats to the location where they were trapped, to discourage unaltered cats from acquiring their territories and reproducing there. Humane traps are available to borrow for a refundable \$70 deposit per trap, and staff at the clinic are happy to provide demonstrations. Visit SpayArkansas.org for tips on pre-and-post surgery instructions, and to learn more about trapping and releasing feral cats.

But what if you can't trap the cats yourself? The Northwest Arkansas Community Cat Project can help. Their mission is "To improve the lives of the estimated 50,000 community cats (stray, abandoned, or feral) living in north west Arkansas by providing low cost spay/neuter, TNR (Trap, Neuter, Return) training and equipment, public education, and increased support and legal protection to colony caretakers, facilitating the humane management of community cats, ultimately decreasing their numbers in shelters and at large." Register your feral cat colony with them, so the cats aren't considered illegal and impounded. Contact Marcia Donny at (479) 442-

7472 or email NWACommunityCatProject@Gmail.com to get advice and help trapping feral cats to be spayed/neutered and released.

Amanda Bancroft is a Master Naturalist and volunteers with her husband Ryan for their solar-powered online educational center on how to make a difference with everyday choices at: www.RipplesBlog.org.