

**Press Release
October 2011**

SPCA inundated with kittens at start of breeding season

The number of abandoned, stray and surrendered cats and kittens admitted to the Cape of Good Hope SPCA cattery during September, increased by 70% to 228 as a direct result of owners not sterilising their cats.

Although cats can breed all year-round, the period September to March is generally regarded as the active breeding season. If left unsterilised, a young female cat is fertile from as young as six months and will have an average of two litters per year with an average of 2.8 kittens surviving each litter. Should an owner allow two cats and their surviving offspring to breed for ten years, in that time, they'll produce 80,399,780 cats!

"Owners who fail to spay or neuter their pets are contributing to the serious pet over-population problem in our city", says CoGH SPCA Animal Care Centre Manager, Margie Ainscow.

Under the City of Cape Town's new Animal bylaw, owners may be forced to sterilize their cats if the authorized official believes it to be "in the interests of the welfare of the cat; to prevent nuisance; when the cat is stray; and, on the request of the owner, and that the costs thereof may be recovered from the owner."

"Unwanted litters are often dumped or left to roam and allowed to breed uncontrollably. We urge people to not be part of this problem and to sterilize their cats. If not, many will die young of disease or starvation - but not before they have had more litters, further adding to the problem", she says.

"Affordability need not be an excuse. Most animal welfare groups including the CoGH SPCA will sterilize cats at a subsidised rate for those who genuinely cannot afford private veterinary fees", she says. "However, if you cannot care for your cat or any pet please do not dump it and rather surrender it to the SPCA, as we will never turn any animal away", says Ainscow.

To spay or neuter your cat, contact your local veterinarian or the CoGH SPCA Animal Hospital on 021 700 4140/45 or email hosman2@spca-ct.co.za. To adopt a cat or kitten from the SPCA visit www.spca-ct.co.za or email adoptions@spca-ct.co.za

Ends

Issued by the Cape of Good Hope SPCA. For more information, contact Lamees Martin on 021 700 4141 or email comms@spca-ct.co.za

Myths about spaying or neutering your cat from <http://kirra.tripod.com/spay.html>

"My cat is indoors only".

All too often we hear stories of people with unspayed indoor cats that escape, and return pregnant. Spaying or neutering your indoor cat will prevent it from contributing to the overpopulation crisis in the event of accidental release. In addition, spaying or neutering your cat will reduce or eliminate annoying (or even costly) mating-associated behaviors, such as spraying (by males) and calling (by females). Furthermore, sterilizing your cat will reduce the likelihood that it attempts to escape in order to find a mate.

“I can't afford to spay or neuter my cat”.

During the lifetime of your cat you may spend thousands of Rand on food, accessories, and veterinary expenses. Spaying or neutering your cat is just a drop in the bucket. These procedures should be considered part of the basic and required veterinary expenses, along with the usual vaccinations. So, if you can't afford to spay or neuter your cat, you can't afford to adopt one at all.

Keep in mind that spaying or neutering your cat may actually *reduce* your veterinary expenses, by reducing the possibility that your cat roams far and wide to seek a mate and, as a result, gets injured or contracts a serious disease requiring large veterinary expenses. Furthermore, there are many animal welfare organizations, like the SPCA, who will sterilize your animals at an affordable rate.

If you really believe you can't afford to spay or neuter your cat, but can afford the other expenses, please adopt an adult cat that is already spayed or neutered.

“Spaying or neutering a cat interferes with it's free will”.

Although cats are intelligent creatures, they do not plan their futures or consider the consequences of breeding. They just do it, and doing so is not an exercise of free will but one of instinct. When we take a cat into our homes, we also accept the responsibility of making decisions on their behalf. One decision we should make is to prevent them from breeding.

“If my cat has kittens, I can always take them to the shelter or sell them”.

Most shelters cannot accommodate the large number of cats in need of homes. During peak kitten season, no-kill shelters are usually filled to capacity, and shelters that do euthanize are forced to kill many, many cats. People who seek homes for litters born to their cats often have great difficulty finding them. Preventing your cat from reproducing stops the problem before it happens, rather than providing a late semi-cure.

“My cat is male and won't have kittens”.

Would you encourage or allow your son to ‘knock up’ your neighbour's daughter, figuring that it is their problem? Of course not. This kind of attitude is irresponsible for both cats and humans. The only difference is that your neighbour would have some sort of legal recourse in the case of unwanted human pregnancies.

If your male cat fathers a litter, you are part of the problem, whether you are aware of it or not. Don't be irresponsible.

“I want my children to learn of the miracle of life by having them see my cat give birth”.

Are you prepared to show your children the tragedy of death of unwanted pets, by taking them to the shelter, for which no home is available? Consider that even if you arrange, prior to breeding the cat, homes for all of the potential kittens, you will have taken away homes for some wonderful cats in shelters. If you really must breed your cat to show your children kittens, don't make it your own cat, whose breeding can be controlled.

“You have to let your cat have at least one litter before spaying her”.

This is simply incorrect. There are no significant adverse effects of spaying or neutering your pet. In fact, spaying or neutering your cat can reduce the chances of it developing breast or prostate cancer later in life.