



REAL ISSUES

Pet Overpopulation and Spay/Neuter



Do you have a dog or cat? If you adopted her from your local shelter or humane society, you're smart! Animal shelters have the best selection of pets anywhere, from the purriest tabby to the furriest kitten, from the waggiest puppy to the shaggiest dog.

Ever wonder where shelters get all their animals? Sometimes people let their dogs and cats have litters, and then can't find homes for the babies. And sometimes unlucky pets get lost and are found roaming the streets.

Life on the street is tough for dogs and cats. They don't get regular meals and tender loving care like your pets do, and if they become sick, there's no one there to bring them to the veterinarian. They don't even have a cozy bed to curl up in when it's cold outside. It's such a hard life that most strays will not live more than a year or two.

The sad story continues when stray animals mate and have babies. Cats can start having kittens at 4 1/2 months of age, and dogs can have puppies at six months of age. And they can have litters every 3 months—that's four times a year! If one cat had six kittens every three months for five years—and if those kittens have kittens—can you figure out how many cats would be born in total?

Does it seem like there are too many animals and not enough homes for them all? You are right. That is a good way to explain pet overpopulation. But there are a lot of groups working together to help put an end to pet overpopulation—and you can help, too. Read on to find out more and **JOIN IN THE FIGHT!**

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[How to Report Animal Cruelty](#)

[Officer Lucas's Top Tips for Fighting Animal Cruelty](#)

[Go On Poison Patrol To Keep Your Pets Safe!](#)

[So, You Wanna Be an Animal Cop?](#)

[When a Pet Dies](#)

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[Cold Weather Tips](#)

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[How You Can Help Animals](#)

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP END PET OVERPOPULATION

- Is your pet spayed or neutered? Veterinarians spay or neuter cats and dogs (and rabbits, too) to prevent them from having babies. If your pet has not had this operation, talk to your parents and explain why it is so important. Spay surgery is done on females, and neuter surgery is done on male animals. If you did the math equation above, you know how many lives are being saved just by neutering or spaying one cat or dog!
- Read more about [spaying and neutering](#) at ASPCA.org.
- Volunteer to help an elderly or sick person care for their pet. For example, you can help by walking the dog or changing the kitty litter. And just think—your help may allow someone to keep a pet they may otherwise have had to send to a shelter! (P.S. Be sure to let your parents know if you plan to do this.)
- Find out if your local shelter accepts volunteers your age. You can also organize a drive for towels and blankets—shelter animals love to cuddle in them! Or why not have a bake sale, and donate what you earn to your local shelter or an animal organization that focuses on fighting pet overpopulation?