

# Overpopulation of animals

[Environment](#), [Animals](#)



Millions of companion animals are being euthanized by animal shelters each year nationwide. One might ask why this is. Is there any one person or persons that is responsible for the over population of animals going to our local shelters? These are all questions that need to be answered. If we as the general public want to start tackling these problems, we need to gain further understanding of how and why these problems are created in the first place.

As with every topic there are always two sides to every story. This topic is no different. The different voices and opinions vary as much as the different types of breeds of animals. First you have the authority group, like that of your local animal shelters and humane societies. These groups agree primarily on the idea that yes, animal over population is a huge problem, and that spaying and neutering is the number one way to stop domesticated animals from creating more and more offspring.

The second solution that many of the authority groups share is the fact that pet owners are not always as informed as they should be about the amount of time, attention, and money it actually takes to properly care for an animal. While speaking with Dr. Joseph Hoelzle, a local veterinarian of 32 years in Cave Junction, OR, he definitely agrees that animal over population is a HUGE problem. He is presented daily with animals that have been lost or abandoned. Dr. Joe and his staff only have a small facility, so when they do receive dogs and cats at their door step, they are very limited in the options they have.

If an animal is very sick or injured they have the legal right to euthanize. Otherwise if the animal in question is a dog they have to call the local animal

shelter, as they do not have the facilities to facilitate dogs. Cats on the other hand, they can do more with. Dr. Joe and his staff can house them longer and try and find homes for them. When asked his opinion on whether or not he thought the public is lacking in education on the actual amount of responsibility it takes to take care of animals, his response was yes, definitely. Take horses for example, people see horses and how pretty they are and decided to bring one home. If you have never owned a horse before, or have never even been exposed to horses and how to take care of them, then you have no clue how much work it actually takes to maintain one. " Dr. Joe went on to say that the average size dog that is in good health takes approximately \$10, 000 a year to properly care for them. The first step when making any decisions on obtaining an animal, no matter what type or breed, is always research.

Research how big they will be, what types of health problems are prone to those specific animals, do they require a lot of maintenance, are they high in energy, and so forth. Another interview that was conducted was with Marci, from the Josephine County Animal Shelter in Grants Pass, OR. Not knowing how far out the animal shelter was from my location, I made sure to leave with plenty of time to find the shelter as well as be early for the actual interview itself. As I was sitting out front of the animal shelter waiting for my interview to be had, I can hear all the barking and howling of all the dogs. Through their sad cries you can hear the yearning in their voices to just be loved. This is just one of the many reasons I absolutely love dogs. Although they are locked in " jail" not know what their final destination might be, they

still greet everyone with a smile, and a wagging tail, faithful to the end. The first question to break the ice that I asked Marci was, do you like your job. Marci says she absolutely loves her job and would not change anything she does daily that she is somewhat of an adrenalin junkie. This job is a very rewarding job, frustrating at times but very rewarding. You get the chance to make a difference, a difference with not only the animals that you receive or rescue, but also with the community. " Life as an officer of the animal shelter can be very challenging at times. Some of the challenges they face on a regular basis is a lack of support, a huge lack in funding, lack of man power, and a lack of the proper equipment. They do not have all the fancy equipment that is seen in magazines, or on the popular TV. show on Animal Planet, Animal Police.

Marci goes on to state, " We do not even have the proper funding right now to obtain something as simple as ramps for our trucks. " According to Brad Tally, the animal control supervisor for the Josephine County Animal Shelter, there Annual budget is \$400, 000. The shelter only receives a total of \$75, 000 from general funding. The shelter themselves are responsible for raising the remaining balance of \$325, 000 themselves. They do this through fundraising, donations and the funds they receive from pet owners licensing their pets.

Marci explains that it is an Oregon state law that a dog is licensed. Oregon does not recognize cats. If an animal control officer is called out to a residence for something like a disturbance call, and they realize that the dog is not licensed, the owner can be fined for the cost of the original license plus

an added thirty dollar penalty fee. If the owner is still not compliant within 30 days of the citation, they can be fined again with a \$360 dollar citation. “ We would rather not issue citations; we would rather try and cut the owners a break by giving them a verbal warning. Marci’s thoughts on animal overpopulation and a productive method of reducing the number of animals producing offspring’s that potentially have no homes to go to, are similar to those of Dr. Joe. She says that the overpopulation of domesticated animals can be stopped by spaying and neutering. That there are a lot of programs out there that can and will help with the cost of the procedures.

“ If every pet owner decided to get their animals spayed or neutered, the number of animals being picked up and dropped off would decrease significantly. One incentive that is already in place statewide is that, if a pet owner does get their dogs fixed the cost of the licensing is also reduced. The cost goes from thirty five dollars down to eighteen dollars. Another issue Marci raised that contributes to the overpopulation problem was the fact that there are “ back yard” breeders that breed dogs for money. “ They are not breeding their pure bred with another type of pure bred to better the breed; they are breeding these dogs just to gain money. They have no actual intention on ever doing anything with these dogs; they merely do this out of pure greed. An opposing view point to this statement taken from CQ Researcher: America’s Pampered Pets, By Mary H. Cooper Volume 6, issue 48, Para. 29 states that: AKC breeders argue that because their dogs are healthy and properly groomed, their rights to breed animals should not be taken away. When Marci was asked about the disturbing fact that millions of animals are being euthanized each year in American shelters and whether or

not this was true, her response was actually rather positive. She was able to leave a sense of hope, in my now saddened realities.

Marci stated that their rates of euthanasia have dropped considerably. That the shelter has started looking for other means of dealing with their animals other than turning directly to euthanizing. Each year animal shelters nationwide receive what is known as "throw away pets". What exactly are throw away pets? Picture this; you're out one day driving around with the family, and all of a sudden you see one of those handmade signs that read "Free Puppies". So you decided to pull over... you walk up to see all the adorable puppies, wagging their tails and looking at you with those big innocent eyes.

You and the family take one home, not really knowing much about the puppy, let alone its breed. And before you know it, this cute little adorable puppy has turned out to be way more work than you or your family had initially anticipated. So with not wanting to continue to keep up with the daily responsibilities of owning the dog, you decided to take it to the local animal shelter in hopes that it will find a "better home". This is where the term "throw away" dogs comes from. Sadly enough, this is what Marci and the others at the Animal shelter see on a daily basis.

The general procedure that is followed when a new animal is received differs from cats to dogs. The first step is the initial paperwork that is involved, getting them "logged into jail". After they have done the paper work one of the first things they do is scan the animal in hopes to find a microchip. (Microchips are tiny chips surgically implanted into a dog or cats skin that

contains all of the owners contact information. ) If there is not a microchip present and the dog does not have any type of licensing information on them, then the dog is held for seventy two hours.

During the holding period the dog is kept in the back kennels away from potential adoptees. A lost and found book is gone through to make sure that the dog in question has not already been called in as lost. If in the seventy two hour period the dog is still not claimed, they perform a temperament test. If the dog passes the temperament test, then they are eligible for adoption. The other means of handling stray dogs other than euthanasia, mentioned earlier in the paper, that the shelter turns to are working with other programs as well as other counties.

Some of the programs they work with are PAWS and Dogs for the Deaf. The other county they work with to place dogs into forever homes is Jackson County. PAWS is a non-profit animal shelter located in West Linn, Oregon. According to their website located at [www.pawsanimalshelter.org](http://www.pawsanimalshelter.org), Since we opened our doors on June 6, 1999, we have found homes for over 1, 000 cats, 45 dogs, 1 rabbit, 2 turtles, 1 pigeon, and a miniature horse. According to the website [www.dogsforthedeaf.org](http://www.dogsforthedeaf.org), Dogs for the Deaf rescue dogs from animal shelters throughout Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and California.

We choose dogs that are people friendly, confident, and motivated by toys, treats, and affection. We rescue, train, and place 30-40 dogs annually. The dogs are trained with positive reinforcement and lots of love. When asked Marci's opinion on the lack of public information, and whether or not this could be one of the factors that is contributing to the overpopulation of

animals in animal shelters, her response was, " As far as public information, that is something we do, but with the lack of man power and time we have, this is something that we cannot do enough of. There are only two actual officers working out of the Josephine County Animal Shelter, Marci and her partner Bill. Between the two of them they are expected to answer to every single call placed out of Josephine County.

This area is roughly from the California border, to the Glendale off ramp, out to the Applegate area. This is where the lack of man power comes into play. An article in the Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science, (Beyond Overpopulation: A comment on Zawistowski et al. and Salman et al. By: Fehell, Lee Anne, 1999 Vol. , Issue 3. Para. 24) Brings up yet another reason as to why animals start to stack up in animal shelters. " The general public more times than not are detoured away from their local animal shelters due to the common knowledge that pets is killed at the site. They do not want to be made feel guilty or responsible for that animal's life if they do not pick that certain one to bring home. " Getting a new animal is and welcoming that animal into your home is supposed to be an exciting joyous event, not something that is associated with death or defeat.

Although there is a majority of people who would rather obtain a dog or cat from someone they know rather than going to a shelter and possibly taking home an animal that they were not a hundred percent set on, there is also a large majority of people who feel the complete opposite. They would rather go to the local animal shelter and possibly save that cat or dogs life. This in



my opinion gives these individuals a sense of accomplishment. Here is a poem about just that.