

Mandatory Spay/Neuter Laws

Mandatory spay/neuter laws are usually considered by state and local governments in response to animal control concerns in the community. Proponents often believe that mandatory spay/neuter laws will reduce the number of animals at the local shelters and strays roaming in neighborhoods. However, such laws are ineffective in addressing animal control concerns and can harm dogs and punish responsible owners.

Mandatory Spay/Neuter Laws are Ineffective

Mandatory spay/neuter laws do not reduce shelter populations. In fact, some shelters have seen an increase as owners choose to relinquish their pets if they are unable to pay the costs associated with sterilization.

Moreover, many national research organizations have reported that the majority of unwanted dogs come from irresponsible owners who are unwilling to train, socialize, or care for their dogs. Imposing a mandatory spay/neuter law will not resolve the issue of irresponsible ownership.

Mandatory Spay/Neuter Laws are Difficult to Enforce

Mandatory spay/neuter laws are extremely difficult to enforce and can be easily evaded by irresponsible animal owners. In fact, these laws often result in a decrease in the number of dogs licensed, because some individuals choose to not license their animals in order to avoid spaying and neutering their pets.

Mandatory Spay/Neuter Laws Can Harm Dogs

Studies continue to demonstrate that spaying and neutering is not in the best interest of every dog. In particular, juvenile spay/neuter can lead to incontinence, joint issues, cancer or even a shorter life span.¹ The choice to sterilize a dog is an important health decision that should be made by owners in conjunction with a veterinarian. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), who also opposes mandatory sterilization, notes that some owners will avoid veterinary care in order to hide their lack of compliance.²

[1] American Kennel Club, "Addendum #2: Selection of Studies Demonstrating Negative Impact of Juvenile and Mandatory Spay/Neuter." https://images.akc.org/governmentrelations/documents/pdf/Addendum2_Dec2014.pdf

[2] American Veterinary Medical Association, "Dog and Cat Population Management" <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/dog-and-cat-population-management>

Mandatory Spay/Neuter Laws are Expensive for the Community

Mandatory spay/neuter laws greatly increase the workload of animal control officers, many of which are already financially strained. The laws can also increase shelter populations when pets are relinquished. Mandatory spay/neuter laws also can mean fewer AKC events, which generate significant economic impact for local communities each year.

Mandatory Spay/Neuter Laws are Unfair to Responsible Dog Owners

Mandatory spay/neuter laws do not address an owner's level of responsibility or the behavior of their animals. Owners may keep dogs intact for health, responsible breeding, participation in dog events, hunting, or many other humane reasons. Responsible owners have a right to use their own discretion in determining whether to sterilize their animals.

A Better Solution Is Available

Instead of imposing mandatory spay/neuter laws on all dog owners, governments should focus on enforcing effective animal control laws (including leash and containment laws) and expanding public education efforts to promote responsible pet ownership. AKC and many local dog clubs can assist in developing effective animal control laws and public education programs that address a community's concerns while also protecting the rights of responsible owners.



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