

Mandatory Spay/Neuter Laws: A Bad Idea

The No-Kill movement is united in opposition to mandatory spay/neuter laws because empirical evidence proves:

- these laws do not work,
- they divert resources from programs that do work
- they often actually *increase shelter intake and killing.*



At first glance, mandatory spay/neuter laws seem like a good idea. There's just one problem: mandatory spay/neuter laws do not increase spay-neuter compliance rates. They do not reduce shelter intake, they are not cost-effective and they do not save lives.



Mandatory spay/neuter advocates falsely assume that most people aren't currently spaying and neutering their pets, and that if there were a law requiring spay/neuter, they would do so. Both of these assumptions are incorrect.

According to empirical evidence, the overwhelming majority of Americans have already spayed or neutered their pets. In fact, a recent study demonstrated that over 90% of Americans earning \$35K or more have already spayed or neutered their pets and at least half of

those families earning *less* than \$35K/year have already done so. As a result, the population of Americans who haven't spayed or neutered their pets is relatively small, and it's near-entirely a matter of financial means—not legal motivation. When mandatory spay/neuter laws are passed, families who cannot afford the money or time to have their pets surgically altered are forced to surrender their pets (or the pets are seized).

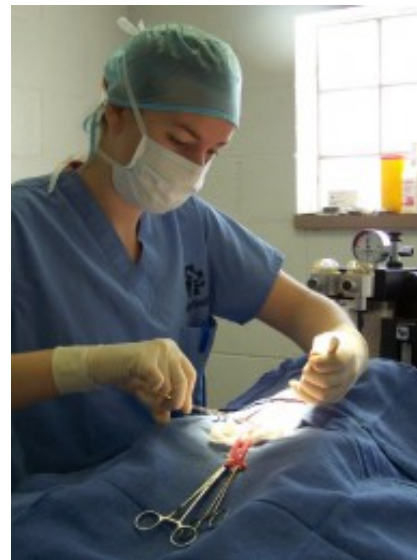


Multiple studies have concluded that the *only proven way* to increase spay/neuter compliance is through the provision of low-cost and free spay-neuter services, *not* through regressive laws that focus on punishing poor families rather than empowering responsible behavior. Mandatory spay/neuter laws may also be a threat to public health. These laws may cause pet owners to avoid regular visits to their veterinarians as a way to circumvent the spay/neuter mandate, preventing pets from receiving rabies and other vaccinations vital to animal and human health. The potential reductions in medical care and rabies vaccinations has led veterinary groups to oppose mandatory spay/neuter laws.

Organizations opposed to mandatory spay/neuter laws include: The ASPCA, Alley Cat Allies, The American Veterinary Medical Association, Austin Pets Alive!, The Austin No Kill Coalition, Fix Austin, Love-A-Bull, The No Kill Advocacy Center, Pet Connection, The Anti-Cruelty Society, The American Dog Owners Association, Best Friends Animal Society and both The American College of Theriogenologists and The Society for Theriogenology (which are the two groups of veterinarian specialists in spaying and neutering).

Any law with financial consequences for owners who do not spay/neuter is a mandatory spay/neuter law.

If a government mandates a penalty for failing to alter an animal (in the form of either a fine, a seizure or surrender of the animal, or a "fee"), it is commonly referred to as a "mandatory" spay/neuter law in the national animal welfare community. Based on empirical evidence, we know it will fail.



Mandatory Spay/Neuter A Case Study: Los Angeles

For six years, the intake rate for dogs and euthanasia declined.

Year	Intake	Euthanized	Change from previous year
2001	40,442	22,675	---
2002	34,295	17,335	-24%
2003	30,605	12,821	-62%
2004	26,949	9,985	-22%
2005	25,740	8,127	-19%
2006	24,999	6,949	-15%
2007	25,792	6,051	-13%

In 2008 the City passed a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance.

Here's what happened.

2008	30,813	7,518	+24%
2009	31,869	7,624	+1.5%
2010	33,396	8,210	+7.7%

Intake increased and more adoptable dogs were killed.