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## Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland

### **Animal Welfare Organizations of Portland Unite with Goal to End Euthanasia of Shelter Animals**

#### **Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland (ASAP)**

(Feb. 26, 2008) — Emphasizing the importance of spay/neutering as a solution to the growing pet overpopulation problem in the Portland Metro area, leaders from Portland's largest animal welfare organizations and the veterinary community choose 'Spay Day USA' to announce the formation of the 'Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland'. The group's mission is to end the euthanasia of healthy, social, and treatable cats and dogs in Portland-area shelters.

The Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland's (ASAP) ten founding organizations include: Alliance for Contraception in Cats and Dogs; Cat Adoption Team; Clackamas County Dog Services; Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon; Humane Society for Southwest Washington; Multnomah County Animal Services; Oregon Humane Society; Portland Veterinary Medical Association; Southwest Washington Veterinary Medical Association; Washington County Animal Services/Bonnie L. Hayes Small Animal Shelter.

"This is an unprecedented gathering of animal welfare organizations and the veterinary community in the greater Portland area," comments Joyce Briggs, Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland's spokesperson. "These founding organizations care for 90 percent of the unwanted animals in the greater Portland metro area which amounts to close to 43,000 cats and dogs annually. They look into the eyes of the problem everyday. Now as they come together, they are empowered to find solutions." All ASAP founding organizations are committed to working together to save lives.

The first solution ASAP is working on is reducing the number of cats entering and ultimately being euthanized in shelters. Last year, 26,478 cats and kittens were taken in by Portland metro area shelters. However, 13,074 of them lost their lives due to lack of homes, space, and resources.

ASAP launched a targeted pilot subsidized spay/neuter project for low-income residents, CatNIP (cat neuter incentive program), in order to reduce these numbers. This program was funded with \$60,000 in grants that will subsidize 800 surgeries with a co-pay of \$10. Today over 500 subsidized spay/neuter surgeries have been performed in two targeted zip codes, and ASAP estimates that beginning in 2009, shelters should see a drop in cats from those SE Portland neighborhoods. ASAP sees, however, a need to create a broader program to assist cat owners in financial need as well as homeless pets and feral cats throughout the greater Portland area.

While all the Portland area shelters are striving to maximize and share resources to find homes for as many cats and dogs as possible, “we can’t adopt our way out of this problem,” remarks Britta Bavaresco, Executive Director of the Cat Adoption Team in Sherwood; a sentiment echoed by all the organizations of ASAP. “The only way to make any impact on the numbers of unwanted cats coming into shelters is to reduce the numbers out there in the community. For that we need to offer targeted, subsidized spay and neuter surgeries for cat owners of fertile cats, who understand the importance of spaying and neutering, yet are in need of financial assistance,” continues Bavaresco.

One of ASAP’s future community projects will focus on pet identification to increase the numbers of lost pets returned to their owner. Nationally around 16 percent of lost dogs and only 2 percent of lost cats are found and returned to their original owners.

ASAP will also collaborate on ways to improve the adoptability of power breed dogs such as pit bulls. These are usually the first dogs euthanized in shelters, yet as a breed can be loving companions.

Finally, ASAP will adopt a community-wide standard of collecting and reporting animal shelter data, thereby streamlining reporting, transparency, and consistency among the shelters.

The Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland’s acronym is no accident. “With so many lives at stake, today, the sense of urgency is quite real, and the founding organizations of the Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland are committed to acting ASAP,” comments Briggs. “We hope the community will join us because we cannot do it alone.”

# **Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is ASAP?**

ASAP stands for the Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland, greater metro area. This acronym was also chosen because the mission of ASAP is, indeed, one of urgency so more lives are saved.

### **What is ASAP's mission?**

Our mission is to end the euthanasia of social, healthy, or treatable cats and dogs in our local shelters by collaborating on spay/neuter programs, educational, and outreach efforts, and the promotion of humane alternatives for feral cats.

### **Who is part of ASAP?**

The Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland has ten founding organizations:

- Alliance for Contraception in Cats & Dogs
- Cat Adoption Team
- Clackamas County Dog Control
- Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon
- Humane Society for Southwest Washington
- Multnomah County Animal Services
- Oregon Humane Society
- Portland Veterinary Medical Association
- Southwest Washington Veterinary Medical Association
- Washington County Animal Services/Bonnie L. Hays Small Animal Shelter

### **Why was ASAP formed?**

Leaders of several of these groups agreed that many of the issues we were addressing individually could benefit from a collaborative and regional approach. Animal welfare issues are complex and finding long-term, meaningful solutions requires input and support from public and private shelters as well as the veterinary community.

The Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland's founding organizations provide care for more than 90 percent of the homeless animals in the greater Portland metro area.

### **What area does ASAP serve?**

ASAP collaborates on issues affecting the four counties including and surrounding Portland, OR: Clackamas, Multnomah, Washington, and Clark (WA). Our boundaries are defined by human population density (and, therefore, pet population density), not geography.

ASAP shelters and organizations assist a community of nearly 2 million people, with 9 percent of these living below the poverty line, and nearly 1 million cats and dogs. It is estimated that 462,000 cats and 402,000 dogs share homes with Portlanders, with an additional estimated 100,000 free-roaming, stray, or feral cats in the community.

### **What is ASAP currently working on?**

After the ASAP shelters looked at their collective shelter statistics, it was determined that the cat overpopulation problem was at crisis level. Over the last three years, an average of 23,600 cats and kittens enter the shelter system in Portland and over 13,000 of those cats and kittens are euthanized. To put it more directly, an average of 36 cats/kittens in Portland-area shelters are euthanized every day.

We cannot adopt our way out of this crisis. Targeted spay/neuter and the reduction of the feline population is the only way to reduce these numbers. To that end ASAP launched its CatNIP (Cat Neuter Incentive Program) – subsidized spay/neuter pilot program for low-income cat owners – targeted at the highest risk zip codes. The CatNIP program is funded with grants totaling \$60,000. To date, CatNIP has sterilized over 500 cats for a co-pay of \$10. It is estimated that each year, ASAP organizations and the veterinary community will need to do an additional 10,000 spay/neuter surgeries (on top of the almost 60,000 done annually) to see a reduction in the overall number of cats relinquished to shelters and ultimately euthanized.

### **What kind of projects does ASAP tackle?**

ASAP projects have a region-wide impact on ending the euthanasia of social, healthy, or treatable cats and dogs and promoting humane alternatives for feral cats.

Currently, we are providing spay/neuter services for owned and feral cats bought in by responsible individuals in financial need in a targeted area of SE Portland (see above).

ASAP founding organizations are researching strategies to improve the adoptability of power breed dogs in our shelters. Power breed dogs – or bully dogs – could be categorized as mixed or pure breed Pit Bulls, Rottweiler, Doberman, German Shepherds, etc. About 20 percent of the shelter dog intake are these power breeds, and unfortunately, over half of these are euthanized.

All of our groups are also working together to adopt a community wide standard for collecting and reporting animal shelter data, thereby streamlining reporting, transparency, and consistency. (For more information on this process, please see [www.asilomaraccords.org](http://www.asilomaraccords.org).)

### **How is the group funded?**

ASAP is not a 501(c)(3) charity; ASAP receives support from each of the organizations/agencies on an equitable basis. Funding for specific projects comes from grants and foundations.

### **How can other groups participate?**

Additional groups are welcome to work with us on specific issues with ASAP leaders. For example, we partner with Oregon Spay/Neuter Fund and Cherish the Animals on our CatNIP (Cat Neuter Incentive Program) spay/neuter program for low income families in SE Portland.

### **How do I donate to ASAP?**

Donations can be made to any ASAP organization/agency and earmarked for ASAP.

# **Pet Overpopulation Factoids**

## **Courtesy of the Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland**

In 2007<sup>1</sup>:

- Almost 43,000 dogs and cats entered Portland area shelters: 16,482 dogs and 26,478 cats.
- 17,961 dogs and cats were adopted from Portland area shelters: 6386 dogs and 11,575 cats.
- 5337 dogs and cats were returned to their owner: 4630 dogs and 707 cats.
- 17,603 dogs and cats were euthanized in Portland area shelters: 4529 dogs and 13,074 cats.

About 30 percent of owned dogs are not spayed or neutered and 14 percent of owned cats are not spayed or neutered<sup>2</sup>.

The average cat can produce an average of 3 litters in a year, with each litter consisting of 4 to 6 kittens<sup>3</sup>.

The average dog can produce an average of 2 litters each year, with each litter consisting of 6 to 10 pups<sup>3</sup>.

A female cat can go into heat as young as 4 months old<sup>3</sup>.

18 percent of cat owners adopt their cat from a shelter while 43 percent will get their cat from a friend or relative<sup>4</sup>.

10 percent of dog owners adopt their dog from a shelter while 29 percent will get their dog from a breeder<sup>4</sup>.

Sources:

1 - ASAP shelter statistics

2 - American Veterinary Medical Association

3 - The Humane Society of the United States

4 - American Pet Product Manufacturing Association

