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Experts advice to pet owners: Cost of spaying, neutering less than caring for litters

by Carol Harper Apr 28, 2016



Gently raising the chin of his pug-pom mixed breed dog, Lady, to pose for a photograph, David McClelland told her story: "Friendship Animal Protective League brought her to me about nine years ago to get fixed, and I adopted her. She's one of the mascots at the clinic here." McClelland is owner of 4 Pets Clinic, 38391 Chester Road, Avon. He advocates spaying

and neutering pets.

Carol Harper — The Morning Journal

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Pet experts hope owners weigh with wisdom a decision to spay or neuter a furry member of the family.

“Please don’t litter; fix your critter,” quips a saying on an Alstyle Apparel and Activewear T-shirt at 4 Pets Clinic, 38391 Chester Road in Avon.

The cost of the surgical procedure varies by animal, sex and veterinarian or clinic, from about \$40 to \$300 or more, according to Web searches.

But problems associated with the natural order of things outweigh the cost of precaution, says Dave McClelland, owner of 4 Pets Clinic.

“A cat born on Jan. 1 of this year can be pregnant by July 4 and deliver one or two litters by New Year’s Day, and have two or three litters a year for the rest of her life,” he said. “Then they will deliver kittens. The average is five or six kittens per litter.

“I tell people that an unsplayed cat with plenty of food could deliver 10 to 15 cats per year,” McClelland said. “If you have a pet cat who lives outside, this becomes a problem for you. If you live in a town with 1,000 cats, they could deliver 10,000 cats a year, so we have a problem for the cat and the community.”

Some people depend on a transfer principal.

“People say, ‘I am going to scoop up all these cats and take them to the Humane Society,’” McClelland said. “The Humane Society is doing a wonderful job. But if these cats weren’t properly socialized, they’re not going to make good pets. Three to four months later, they’re ready to become pregnant again.”

One of the missions of 4 Pets Clinic is to offer low-cost spay and neutering, he said, to help families afford the procedures, along with low-cost vaccinations.

In 1995, McClelland also started Friendship Animal Protective League, 8303 Murray Ridge Road in Elyria.

"I've been telling people to get their animals fixed all that time," McClelland said.

Dogs also need population control.

"But usually when people call me about spaying and neutering, they're calling about cats, because there is an abundance of cats in the community," McClelland said. "And we do feral cats. If you get an outdoor cat fixed, at least it won't reproduce."

Finding a cat outdoors and making sure it's not a neighbor's beloved Fluffy who bolted out the door is simple.

"A cat's territory is a few hundred yards from their house," McClelland said. "You can place fliers on doors and ask neighbors if the cat belongs to someone. In other cases it's very obvious the person next door moved out and left a cat. If it's a dog, people call the dog warden. But (the dog warden doesn't) take care of cats."

As special days near, a loving, practical gift could be a gift certificate for a pet spay or neuter, he said.

McClelland practices his own foster-adopt advice. An example is Lady, a pug-Pomeranian mix who greets visitors as a mascot at 4 Pets Clinic.

"Friendship APL brought her to me about nine years ago to get fixed and I adopted her," McClelland said.

Adoptable foster cats who also live at the clinic are 2-year-old Sir William and 3-year-old Faith, a calico.

"Faith only likes women," McClelland said. "She needs a quiet, one-or-two-person, one-pet house. She ended up here pregnant with some medical issues.

Other foster families alleviate the strain on shelters by caring for dogs and cats in their homes until loving adoptive families welcome them home.

Corinne Jaenke of Elyria works in the cat division of Multiple Breed Rescue in Elyria.

While Jaenke enjoys four pets of her own — three cats and a Rottweiler-Basset hound mixed-breed dog — she also fosters kittens, currently totaling seven.

Three are adoptable now — Bijou, Wednesday and Emma.

“Wednesday is my special girl,” Jaenke said. “She’s a foster, but we’ve raised her since she was a week old. We bottle fed her. She was found on a golf course under a brush pile. There was no mom, no siblings. We think she might be part Maine coon. At 6 months old she’s 11 pounds, which is giant. No one ever found her mom. We’re happy somebody heard her crying and found her.

“All of our cats are fixed and we fix every one before they go home,” Jaenke said. “Our goal is to stop the overpopulation of cats.

“Ferals are hard to spot sometimes,” she said. “We have about 12 in this neighborhood. It’s hard. You end up catching the same one three times in the same trap. We’re involved in a trap, neuter and return program through Friendship APL.

“Bijou had a rough start at life,” Jaenke said. “She was dumped at Sparkle in Grafton, her and three kittens, with all their food, litter, everything.

“Waffles is 6 months old. She was found in Lorain by a guy involved in our rescue. Her two brothers were with her. Their mom was a feral cat who lived in Lorain. She was fixed and returned to her habitat. Waffles was about one pound. Her two brothers were about a half-pound at 4 weeks old. The brothers died the next day after we found them. And one downstairs is Emma. She’s 6 months old with no hair. She’s very thin. They say a lot of it is from malnutrition. She’s put on a couple ounces since we got her. We’ve had her about two weeks.”

Since the Elyria branch of Multiple Breed Rescue does not have a shelter, they hold adoption events from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the second Saturday of every month at Rural King, 430 Oberlin Road in Elyria.

Bijou, a nice cat in Jaenke's home, doesn't stand the stress of adoption events well, Jaenke said, so her personality does not shine through.

Other cats arrive at her home through friends who work together to care for animals.

On March 7, Jaenke received Molly, a cat from the neighborhood around St. Rocco Church in Cleveland.

"A friend of the rescue was feeding her," Jaenke said, "and noticed she was expecting. So they contacted me. By 6:30 a.m. (March 8) the first baby arrived."

Molly delivered three white kittens with black spots.

"She's a wonderful mom. She's very attentive with her babies. (People at St. Rocco are) going to take her back," Jaenke said, adding this will be Molly's last litter of kittens. She will be spayed and released. "She's a neighborhood cat."

A day in the life of a self-avowed "crazy cat lady" is demure and sweet. At night, the household gets interesting.

"Sometimes it is like WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) in this house," Jaenke said. "All you hear is thump, thump-thump, thump, thump. It makes me crazy. They're lucky they're cute, most of the time."

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