



# WHY DO PETS END UP IN SHELTERS?

## Study debunks the “Pet Overpopulation” propaganda!

The term pet “overpopulation” was coined by animal rights spin doctors to further an agenda to get legislation passed to ban all breeding of pets. Carried to the ultimate conclusion there would be no more pets which is their goal.

Animal rights activists have been using smoke and mirrors to make elected officials believe that breeders are responsible for animals relinquished to shelters, not their irresponsible owners.

The National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy (NCPSP) has released the results of several studies undertaken to better understand the issue of unwanted companion animals -- animals that once had a home but lost it.

Little has been known about the reasons why until now. Researchers went into 12 selected animal shelters in the United States for one year to find out why.

The Council states: “This problem cannot be solved unless we truly understand the problem.”

The member organizations of the NCPSP include American Animal Hospital Association, American Humane Association, American Kennel Club, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, American Veterinary Medical Association, Association of Teachers of Veterinary Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Cat Fanciers’

Association, Humane Society of the United States, Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, National Animal Control Association, and Society of Animal Welfare Administrators.

The results of the study show that the top seven reasons for relinquishment for both dogs and cats are the same. This objective data will help develop specific programs to address the issues that have been identified.

### Characteristics of Pets Being Relinquished:

- \* Majority of the surrendered dogs (47.7%) and cats (40.3%) were between 5 months and 3 years of age.
- \* The majority of dogs (37.1%) and cats (30.2) had been owned from 7 months to 1 year.
- \* Approximately half of the pets (42.8% of dogs; 50.8% of cats) surrendered were not neutered.
- \* Many of the pets relinquished (33% of dogs; 46.9% of cats) had not been to a veterinarian.
- \* Animals acquired from friends were relinquished in higher numbers (31.4%% of dogs; 33.2% of cats) than from any other source.
- \* Close to equal numbers of male and female dogs and cats were surrendered.
- \* Most dogs (96%) had not received any obedience training.

### Characteristics of Pet Owners Surrendering Pets

During the confidential interviews, researchers also gathered data on the people surrendering the pets.

“Owners represented a broad range of age, ethnicity, education, and income level, indicating continued efforts will need to reach wide and far into communities across the country,” says Dr. Mo Salman, the article’s senior author.

### From the National Animal Interest Alliance’s Newsletter & Website:

Speaking to the annual rescue conference of the Michigan Purebred Dog Rescue Alliance, **Gary Patronek VMD, PhD, director of the Center for Animals and Public Policy at Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine, said “pet overpopulation” is a meaningless word.**

Patronek praised the success of efforts to reduce numbers — shelter deaths are down to five or six million animals; sterilization of pets has reached 63% of all dogs and 80% of all owned cats; shelter intakes down.

Patronek’s study concluded that dog owners who pay more than \$100 for a dog, take him to a veterinarian more than once a year, and participate in obedience classes are more likely to provide a long-term home for the animal.

“Veterinary care and obedience classes may reinforce the bonding of pet and owner,” the researchers wrote, “... by allowing the owner to experience and appreciate the positive aspects of pet ownership such as companionship, affection, entertainment, and security without overreacting to or being distracted by disruptive or unwanted behavior.”

Their conclusions provide testimony for early intervention through education which has been obvious to animal welfare people all along. ■

### Top 10 Reasons for Relinquishment

#### Dogs

1. Moving
2. Landlord not allowing pet
3. Too many animals in household
4. Cost of pet maintenance
5. Owner having personal problems
6. Inadequate facilities
7. No homes available for litter mates
8. Having no time for pet
9. Pet illness(es)
10. Biting

#### Cats

1. Moving
2. Landlord not allowing pet
3. Too many animals in household
4. Cost of pet maintenance
5. Owner having personal problems
6. Inadequate facilities
7. No homes available for litter mates
8. Allergies in family
9. House soiling
10. Incompatibility with other pets