

Humane Society pushing for spay/neuter clinic at animal shelter

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The Humane Society of Nacogdoches County is looking for private donations to help fund the purchase of medical equipment that will be used to create a spay and neuter clinic inside the Nacogdoches Animal Shelter. The woman who will be performing the procedure that prevents dogs and cats from reproducing is local veterinarian Dr. Wendy Blount, who said the clinic is still in the initial planning phase. But efforts are under way to obtain the necessary equipment, such as operating tables, lights and large portable dog kennels. "There's a lot more to be done," Blount said. According to Blount, there is a significant need for a dedicated clinic at the animal shelter to help facilitate the spaying and neutering of adopted animals. "There are a significant number of adopted animals that they get an owner to agree to spay or neuter, and it never happens. If they can spay and neuter in house, they can go to greater lengths to make sure that, before the animals go out the door, it happens," Blount said. Because of a severe animal overpopulation problem in the county, the animal shelter euthanized almost 3,000 animals last year. While that number may seem staggering, Blount said it's old news to animal welfare volunteers like herself. "Over the last few decades, this county has euthanized anywhere between 4,000 and 7,000 animals each year," she said. "There's something called a euthanasia per capita rate where you calculate the number of euthanasia performed per 10,000 people. Our rates are 100 times higher than they should be. It's a very serious problem." While both public education and a cultural shift toward animal awareness are needed to help lower the number of animals that are euthanized every year in Nacogdoches County, Blount said that spaying and neutering is a basic first step to eliminate the high number of unwanted animals. Other areas of the country, particularly in the Northeast and along both coasts, have adopted proactive procedures that are helping to curb the problem of overpopulation, thus preventing mass euthanasia. But Blount said that here in East Texas, we are "decades" behind where we need to be. "Here, we are killing animals by the ton, and we need to fix the problem," she said. "Having a spay-neuter clinic is only a very small part of the solution, because people have to first be knowledgeable enough to take their animals in to be spayed and neutered." She added that for low-income families, vouchers that go toward paying for the procedure are available. But as of yet, no price structure has been established for the proposed spay and neuter clinic. The hope is that the clinic will be up and running by the end of the year. Within a couple of weeks, the clinic's Web site, spayneuternac.org, will be operational, Blount said. Anyone wishing to make a donation to help the effort may contact the Humane Society of Nacogdoches County at 936 569-7272.