

# Spay/neuter clinic closed temporarily

*Clinic expected to open soon after 'administrative changes'*

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The low-cost spay and neuter clinic has not been operating at the Nacogdoches County Animal Shelter for about three weeks, but it is expected to open again soon and surgeries have still taken place, officials said.

The clinic closed temporarily for some "administrative changes," shelter supervisor Jamie Shelton said.

"We knew in the beginning there would be some things we would need to change around, so that's what we're

doing, we're just changing things around," she said.

Tommy Wheeler, who manages the Nacogdoches Animal Control department, said a reorganization of the way the clinic operates was something that they knew would have to be done at some point simply because a clinic operating out of the shelter is rarely done.

"As we go along, if there was anything we thought we needed to do to modify it and make it better, we knew we would do it," he said.

So what's changing?

Clinic » 5A

Humane Society board member John Anderson said a vet tech who can do both the tech work and administrative work is needed.

"We have to have someone there five days a week, even though the clinic is only functioning one day a week," he said. "It's terribly dependent on having a person who can be a vet tech and be a competent administrative person."

Basically, the clinic will operate the same as it has in the past, but with more community involvement on the veterinarian end, Wheeler said.

"We'd like to divide it up and take so much work off of one person," he said.

Before the reorganization, area Veterinarian Wendy Blount was dealing with the bulk of the low-cost clinic spaying and neutering on her own.

Blount was not available for comment by phone or email Monday and Tuesday, but she has said the restructuring was taking place between the Humane Society of Nacogdoches County and the city's animal services program.

"We're just waiting in the wings," she has said, "and hoping to be back to work soon, because it's a project that means a lot to many citizens of the town, and we can't wait to take the next step forward."

Shelton said the shelter wanted to extend to all vets, the opportunity to work with the clinic.

"We were more afraid of burnout because it was the same vet that was doing it all the time," she said.

Several veterinarians in the area have expressed interest, Anderson said.

"If we do this and works well with a really high-quality person as the city employee who is there five days a week, it makes

it really easy for the other vets to come in and also do some surgeries," he said. "Several of them have expressed an interest in doing so, as long as they have a person who keeps the paperwork and all the drugs together, and has everything ready surgically when they walk in."

A setup like that would keep a single vet from being inundated with the work on top of their own practice.

"There are probably going to be five or six of the seven vets we have in town that will participate," Shelton said. "That's normally the way most spay/neuter clinics do it, they'll have each vet once a month or once every five or six weeks."

While the reorganization is going on, the low-cost spay/neuter needs of those in the community are still being met, Wheeler said.

"We're continuing with the clinic," he said. "What we're doing now is the ones who need to have the low-cost, we're making sure it's done with the different vets in the community so no one will miss out on having an animal spayed or neutered."

The clinic, which has one paid tech on staff, then the vet who performs the procedures, is almost completely volunteer-run, Shelton said.

"It's really cool because we've got a retired surgical nurse, we've got a retired tech and a couple of business owners," she said. "We've got quite a few volunteers for the clinic, and it's good because they all have different duties that they do."

The volunteers are all ready to get back to helping out at the clinic once it reopens, but no date has been set for that reopening, according to Wheeler.