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## Dr. Andrea Looney is lead author on paper published in JAVMA.

### National task force releases guidelines for spay-neuter programs targeted to reduce pet overpopulation/euthanasia

*Spay-neuter programs can meet needs without sacrificing quality*



Ithaca, NY -- Between 8 and 12 million cats and dogs will be abandoned to shelters in 2008; 5 to 9 million will be euthanized because there are not enough homes for them, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). Recommendations of a task force of 22 academic, private nonprofit veterinarians and non veterinarian leaders in shelter/feral medicine from every region of the United States-published today in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association-will guide national efforts to control pet overpopulation and reduce the subsequent euthanasia of unwanted pets. The guidelines call for efficient surgical initiatives that meet or exceed veterinary medical standards of care in providing accessible, targeted sterilization of a large number of dogs and cats.

These guidelines are applicable to the varied programs that have developed to increase delivery of spay-neuter services to targeted populations of animals in order to meet a wide range of geographic and demographic needs. These programs include designated high-volume spay-neuter programs such as stationary and mobile clinics, MASH-style operations, shelter services, feral cat programs and services provided through private practitioners.

"As efforts to reduce the overpopulation and euthanasia of unwanted and surrendered pets have increased, greater attention has been focused on both surgical and nonsurgical spay-neuter programs throughout the US", said Dr. Andrea Looney, title and lead author of the paper. "When veterinarians are required to perform a significant number

of these surgeries per day, they need to deal with multiple economic, practical, and technical viewpoints without sacrificing patient care. With the recent proliferation and diversity of these programs, we wanted to examine the many methods of handling, processing, sedating, anesthetizing, and sterilizing these patients with the final goal being development of guidelines for sound veterinary care in these settings. As we considered the many scenarios, it was amazing that despite the diversity of economic situation, procedures, and setting, high quality consistent veterinary care was provide to these patients and great customer service to the clients. Those teams that perform this high level of service have become extremely proficient at the procedures and have developed unique techniques for this efficiency, safety, quality care, and cost effectiveness of the procedures. We are hopeful that information on these quality practices can be disseminated through the profession via this publication."

The group was originally conceived via veterinarians who do high quality, high volume spay and neuter procedures, and convened by a task force of the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) in 2005. The task force's veterinary medical care guidelines represent current principles of anesthesiology, intensive care medicine, microbiology and population medicine, and surgical practices as best determined via evidence-based medicine and expert opinion from both field and academic veterinarians. They recommend that support teams, equipment, and protocols should be geared toward safety, efficiency and the humane quality care for large numbers of both companion and shelter/feral cats and dogs. "We are very excited about the publication of a document describing medical care guidelines for spay-neuter programs. Our hope is that by providing a consensus document created by a group of professionals with expertise in these areas, the guidelines for consistent, quality care in spay-neuter programs will be set," said ASV President, Dr. Miranda Spindel.

The task force's guidelines are designed to identify the quality care these programs provide, promote consistency in this care, and instill confidence in the referring veterinary and general public regarding high volume spay-neuter programs. Encouragement of increased veterinary participation, guidance for veterinarians who practice in this specialty area, fostering of confidence/patient referral among practitioners regarding local spay-neuter programs, and provision of a set of benchmarks by which funding agencies and donors can determine quality of programs they support is likely to result from publication of the guidelines. The many members of the task group were grateful for the chance to examine these programs throughout the country, identify issues involved in providing the consistent quality care given, promote the soundness of the veterinary profession in these endeavors and for the interaction with the non-profit groups funding the many existing programs and the task force interactions.

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