

Paying for a Statewide Spay/Neuter Assistance Program

Facts about the Pet Food Fee

Why do we need a statewide spay/neuter assistance program?

Tens of thousands of homeless dogs and cats die in Washington's shelters each year. This doesn't need to happen. A statewide spay/neuter program would save lives by addressing the crisis at its source. Such a program would also be proactive; focusing funds on prevention rather than the costs associated with animal care and control. It is less expensive to alter a dog or a cat than it is to impound and euthanize that same animal. The proposed program does not make spay/neuter mandatory.

How will the program be funded?

The program would be funded by a fee on pet food distributed in Washington State. Pet food manufacturers and distributors currently pay an inspection fee for pet food distributed in our state. The proposed fee to fund the spay/neuter program would piggy back on this inspection fee. It is not a retail sales tax. The fee amount would be \$0.025 per pound.

What are the benefits of the pet food fee as funding source?

- Equitable and affordable: Pet owners, not the general public, would pay for this program (more information for pet owners below).
- It does not require state funds or take funding away from any other program.
- It is a reliable source of funding and will produce sufficient revenue to accomplish the program's objectives.
- Because it piggybacks on an existing fee, it minimizes administrative burdens and costs.

Are there any other options to pay for this program?

At least eight other states have established similar statewide spay/neuter assistance programs. The proponents for Washington's spay/neuter bill have reviewed the funding approaches used by those other state programs, and have examined other possible funding methods as well. Some of those funding sources are not available in Washington and others are either not politically feasible, will not raise enough funds or are administratively burdensome. It is clear that the pet food fee is a funding source that is superior to others that have been examined.

How much will I pay extra for pet food?

Assuming the pet-food manufacturers pass along the fee to purchasers, on average, a pet owner feeding one dog and one cat will pay less than \$1 per month. Thousands of pet

owners have signed petitions indicating they would gladly pay this small fee to save tens of thousands of dogs and cats in Washington.

Why should I pay a fee to help other pet owners fix their dogs and cats?

The reality is that low income families own pets and that the high cost of spay/neuter surgery is an obstacle for them. In addition, Good Samaritans around the state are caring for stray and abandoned dogs and cats. This program would help them fix these dogs and cats for an affordable copay. There is a pet overpopulation crisis in our state – the dogs and cats are suffering and our communities are paying millions of dollars to address the aftermath of unwanted dogs and cats. We choose to focus on the humane and cost effective solution of a spay/neuter assistance program.

Will this fee be a problem for low income pet owners?

Low income pet owners will be able to spay and neuter their dogs and cats at low cost: no more than \$10 for a cat spay/neuter surgery and no more than \$20 for a dog spay/neuter surgery. Many low income pet owners have written the bill proponents in support of this program and agree with the small fee that would be placed on pet food to help pay for spay/neuter surgery. There is an urgent need for accessible, low cost spay/neuter service in many parts of the state. In addition, the fee has much less financial impact than the costs of caring for additional dogs, cats, kittens, and puppies, which result from unplanned and unwanted litters.

I am a pet food retailer – will I need to report or pay the pet food fee?

Registrants of pet food are typically pet food manufacturers and would be required to report tonnages and pay the companion animal spay/neuter fee. Entities that register pet food are those who are also responsible for ensuring labels contain required information. That is typically not a responsibility that retailers bear. In short, any entity that sells pet food now and does not have to report tonnages to the Washington Department of Agriculture will not have to report tonnages or pay the companion animal spay/neuter fee on pet food.

Similar spay/neuter legislation proposed in the 2009 and 2010 Washington State legislative sessions was endorsed by the Washington State Federation of Animal Care and Control Agencies; the Humane Society of the United States; the ASPCA; the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association; over 75 local humane societies, animal rescue groups, and other animal welfare organizations; and thousands of individuals throughout Washington who care for companion animals.

For more information please visit www.savewashingtonpets.org