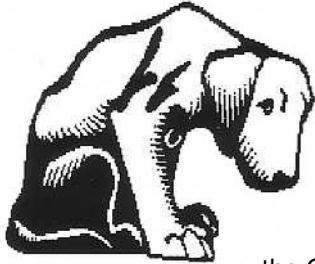




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WHY WE CAN'T STOP TALKING ABOUT IT

She used to be beautiful, but now her coat is matted and she's hungry, thirsty, tired and scared. You may know the dog I'm talking about. She's the Golden Retriever you saw trying to get across the highway.

He's never known a happy moment in his whole life. No one has ever cared for him properly or loved him enough. You know the one I mean. He's the dog tied up in the backyard day and night. The one nobody feeds until the neighbors complain.

They're exquisite, warm and friendly. Why shouldn't they be? What could be more perfect than a box full of puppies? You know the ones I mean. The ones that were left on the steps of the animal shelter one night. Or stuffed into a garbage can and left to die. Or dumped at the side of the road and left to fend for themselves.

Some people don't see the connection between pet overpopulation and animal neglect, abuse and abandonment. They don't understand that when their dog has puppies, many other animals will suffer. But as long as dogs and cats are plentiful, they will be neglected, abused and discarded.

There aren't enough good homes for all the animals, so many end up in bad homes, or on the streets, in research labs or in animal shelters.

Every puppy or kitten in this country reduces the chance that another dog or cat will find a good home.

You may not see the connection between the eight German Shepherd puppies you just sold and the fact that today at least eight dogs must be destroyed in some animal shelter. But that connection is real, and if you allow your pet to breed, you've contributed to pet overpopulation.

The pet overpopulation problem stems from many sources. It comes from people who breed animals intentionally for profit, such as puppy mills or backyard breeders. It comes from animals abandoned and left to fend for themselves, reproducing litter after litter. It comes from hobby breeders who didn't sell their pet-quality puppies with spay/neuter contracts. It even comes from animal shelters that do not ensure that the pets they offer for adoption are spayed or neutered.

It comes from pet owners who allow their pets to wander free out-of-doors where they will inevitably breed. And it comes from people who allow their pets to have "just one litter" for whatever reason, or from those who realize belatedly that "Sam" is really Samantha when she delivers kittens.

When you allow your pet to breed, even if by accident, your action is at the root of the pet overpopulation problem. Authorities estimate that up to 15 million dogs and cats are euthanized every year in the United States. Many more will die on city streets, country roads or in research labs. (It's hard to reduce wasteful or repetitive animal research when scientists have an endless and cheap supply of subjects.)

The animal shelters can work day and night and not make a dent in pet overpopulation unless you sterilize your animals. We can't do it without you. That's why we can't stop talking about it! And we can't stop hoping that one more person will spay or neuter his or her pet so that fewer animals will be mistreated or destroyed. Will you be that one person?