



Key Messages for Meetings and Media Interviews

What are “key messages”?

A key message is the primary thought that you want to leave with your councillors, mayor, or other representative after speaking to them. Key messages will help you to prepare and stay focused when you have the opportunity to speak to media or others who are interested in accessible spay/neuter. Having key messages also makes certain that politicians are hearing the same point, from multiple sources and multiple times. This ensures that the importance of accessible spay/neuter will stay with politicians during and after the election.

The key messages below are based on the CFHS’s report, *The Case for Accessible Spay/Neuter in Canada* (funded by PetSmart Charities of Canada), a detailed, referenced document that lays out the issue.

General

Accessible spay/neuter saves lives and cuts costs

Canada has a companion animal overpopulation problem. Shelters across the country are at or near capacity to care for the animals that are brought to their doors.

In 2012, more than 60,000 Canadian shelter animals were euthanized.

Animal care professionals, including the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, widely agree that increasing spay/neuter rates is the key to reducing companion animal overpopulation.

What is accessible spay/neuter?

Spaying and neutering (also known as “fixing” or “altering”) are standard medical procedures to surgically alter cats and dogs so they are unable to reproduce.

Companion animal sterilization provides many public health and safety benefits as well as cost savings to public coffers.

Accessible spay/neuter means spay/neuter services available to as many pet guardians as possible.



What are the barriers that prevent more animals from being spay/neutered?

The key barriers are:

- lack of clear and accurate information about spay/neuter;
- the high cost of surgery;
- lack of proximity of veterinary services; and
- other issues of transportation.

What are the costs of cat and dog overpopulation?

Cat and dog overpopulation results in many costs to communities:

- extensive spending by local government agencies responding to animal complaints such as dog bites, nuisances, and livestock death;
- costs of impounding, sheltering, and euthanizing stray, homeless, or abandoned animals;
- costs required to address risks to public health; and
- costs that are more difficult to measure such as the tremendous loss of animal life and the associated animal and human suffering.

What is the solution?

Animal care professionals widely agree that accessible spay/neuter is the solution to companion animal overpopulation. Accessible spay/neuter options include:

- low-cost or subsidized surgery;
- high-quality/high-volume spay/neuter clinics;
- mobile services and transportation assistance; and
- public awareness and education.

Accessible spay/neuter programs may also be supported by legislation and financial incentives. Without accessible spay/neuter programs, laws and incentives have not been found to be sufficient

How do accessible spay/neuter programs address the costs to communities?

Accessible spay/neuter programs have been shown to

- reduced shelter intake and euthanasia levels;
- fewer stray and feral animals;
- fewer animal complaints; and
- increased adoptions in local shelters and rescue agencies;

Sterilization also provides benefits in terms of the individual animal's health and behaviour.



Do accessible spay/neuter initiatives take business away from private practice veterinarians?

It is a myth that spay/neuter initiatives compete for business with private veterinary practices. In fact accessible spay/neuter initiatives have been proven to attract clients who are not yet in a relationship with a veterinarian.

Accessible spay/neuter initiatives also promote the use of non-subsidized veterinary services.

What should governments do?

- Municipalities should invest in accessible spay-neuter solutions and will benefit from cost savings as a result.
- Local and provincial governments should demonstrate leadership and engage their communities to develop accessible spay/neuter solutions.
- Public authorities need to implement consistent, coordinated spay/neuter communication as well as education/outreach programming to promote the importance of companion animal sterilization.
- All stakeholders should engage in collaborative discussion and partnerships to identify and implement the best accessible approaches for a given community.
- The CFHS makes 15 recommendations in its report, *The Case for Accessible Spay/Neuter in Canada*, about what animal welfare organizations, the veterinary community, and governments can do.



Appendix: CFHS Recommendations

For animal welfare organizations

- As historical leaders in addressing issues of companion animal overpopulation, the animal welfare community engage collaboratively with other stakeholders and advocate for accessible spay/neuter programs locally, provincially, and nationally.
- Shelters, SPCAs, humane societies, and rescue organizations incorporate a mandatory spay/neuter program as part of their companion animal adoption procedures.
- Be innovative in creating public outreach activities that engage specific communities and build trust.

For the veterinary community

- Schools of veterinary medicine and private practice veterinarians collaborate with the animal welfare community to address this critical animal welfare issue.
- Veterinary medical associations work with community stakeholders to identify elements within their current regulations and policies that limit accessible spay/neuter and remove these elements without delay.
- The veterinary community support high-quality/high-volume and subsidized spay/neuter initiatives.

For governments

- Each municipality review the current state of companion animal overpopulation and spay/neuter needs in its jurisdiction and establish positive working relationships with local animal welfare and veterinary stakeholders to devise a well-funded accessible spay/neuter program.
- Municipalities establish and enforce companion animal licensing for both cats and dogs that set significantly higher fees for unsterilized versus sterilized animals.
- Revenue from animal control programs (such as licensing fees) be invested directly in accessible spay/neuter initiatives.



- Municipalities recognize the important, long-term benefits of establishing their own accessible spay/neuter clinics and employ veterinarians on staff that are specialized in high-quality/high-volume spay/neuter surgery.
- Local and provincial governments demonstrate leadership and engage the community (including veterinarians, animal welfare organizations, other charitable organizations, concerned citizens) to develop accessible spay/neuter solutions.
- Public authorities implement consistent, coordinated spay/neuter communication as well as education/outreach programming to promote the importance of companion animal sterilization.

In general

- High-quality/high-volume and mobile spay/neuter programs be implemented to target segments of the population that currently have few accessible options.
- Specific spay/neuter initiatives be established to support small rescue organizations and Trap-Neuter-Return initiatives for feral cat colonies.
- All organizations or establishments that offer animals for sale or adoption incorporate mandatory spay/neuter into their procedures.