

Companion Animal Spay/Neuter Assistance Legislation for Washington State SB 5202/ HB 1229

Revenues

The bill proposed for introduction in the 2013 state legislative session would generate approximately \$10 million per year in revenues to be placed in a dedicated account for companion animal spay/neuter assistance.

Revenues would come from a pet-food fee paid by distributors (not retailers) of cat and dog food in Washington State. The fee amount is \$50 per ton, equal to 2.5 cents per pound of pet food. There are approximately 200,000 tons of pet food distributed in Washington each year. The fee would piggyback on an existing pet food inspection fee paid by these distributors, thus greatly simplifying administration.

Financial Benefits of the Bill

ONE: Reduced Costs for Animal Control, Sheltering, and Homeless Animal Care

Estimated Savings: Approximately \$17 million per year or more.



The state of New Hampshire reported that for every dollar spent on its statewide spay/neuter program during the first six years, it saved \$3.23 in sheltering costs (Animal Control Management: A Guide for Local Governments, by G. Handy, International City/County Management Association).

In Washington, it costs approximately 2-3 times as much to handle a stray animal through local animal control agencies and shelters than it does to simply spay/neuter that same animal.

An estimated 200,000 or more animals are taken in by shelters and rescue organizations each year in Washington. New Hampshire's spay/neuter program reduced shelter intake by 34% during its first few years. Similar programs in Jacksonville and Tampa have reduced shelter intake by a third or more. Reducing shelter intake in Washington by a third through this bill would reduce the animal intake by about 67,000 per year. The costs of animal control, sheltering, and ongoing rescue care is estimated to be at least \$250 per animal on average statewide.

TWO: Reduced Dog Bite Injury Claims

Estimated Savings: Approximately \$0.8 million per year.

Unaltered dogs are 7-10 times more likely to cause bite injuries to people than altered dogs. Most victims are children under 12 years old, and children under 5 and adults 65 or older were more likely to be hospitalized after a bite.

In Washington, dog bite injuries cost approximately \$8 million per year (based on data provided by State Farm Insurance). The bill would authorize spay/neuter surgeries for approximately 30,000 dogs per year belonging to low-income individuals.

Estimated Impact: Enacting the bill will reduce annual dog-bite injury liability costs by ten percent or more, saving approximately \$800,000 per year, and reduce injury, pain and suffering.

THREE: Benefits for Small Business Jobs in Washington as providers of spay/neuter surgery



The bill authorizes expenditures for surgical sterilization of approximately 65,000 cats and dogs for qualified animal caretakers and owners (low income) each year. Most of the surgical clinics would be small, private veterinary practices serving communities large and small throughout Washington. There are several hundred small, private veterinary practices that would have jobs supported through this bill while performing a vital community service.

The Humane Solution is also the Fiscally Responsible Solution

Passing the companion animal spay/neuter assistance bill is not just about being compassionate to animals. It's about saving our citizens and communities money and improving public safety. **Please support passage of this legislation. It is the fiscally responsible solution. At least eight other states have established statewide spay/neuter programs in order to humanely and cost effectively deal with the pet overpopulation crisis.**

For more information, contact Washington Alliance for Humane Legislation at info@savewashingtonpets.org and visit the organization's website at www.savewashingtonpets.org.