



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY**  
OF THE UNITED STATES

*Celebrating Animals, Confronting Cruelty*

[humanesociety.org](http://humanesociety.org)



## **Messaging Spay/Neuter Lessons from the Gulf Coast Spay/Neuter Campaign**

**March 2009**

**Heather Cammisa, Spay/Neuter Initiatives Manager**



**This report is the culmination of a two year effort to understand what approaches are most effective to motivate people to spay or neuter their pets.** Although the research occurred in Louisiana and Mississippi, consistent results across groups by age, income, ethnicity and other factors suggest that the results are broadly applicable across the United States. Humane groups nationwide are already applying findings shared in 2008 at The HSUS Animal Care Expo, Taking Action for Animals and other conferences.

The research included spay / neuter promotion examples from a variety of organizations. Negative comments from pet owners show that what appeals to us doesn't always appeal to our target audience. These comments are not intended to criticize the organizations that developed the communications or reflect badly on any organization that has pursued similar approaches.

The purpose of this report is to share results so that together we know more and accomplish more with our outreach efforts.



# Report Outline

- The Project
- Research Approach and Applicability
- Increasing Spay / Neuter
  - Determine the target audience
  - Decrease the barriers
  - Define the message
  - Design the communications
  - Direct the outreach
  - Summary
- Campaign Materials



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# The Project



## Project Background

The Katrina recovery effort highlighted pet overpopulation and limited humane infrastructure in Louisiana and Mississippi. This project grew from concerns about challenges in the region and momentum that national and local groups established to address solutions.

To invest wisely, The HSUS pursued extensive research with pet owners on spay and neuter decisions. Rather than spend money on past outreach approaches that had not been fully effective, the project team explored:

- Owner attitudes and behaviors around spay or neuter
- **How best to communicate spay and neuter to reduce companion animal overpopulation and resulting euthanasia**

The resulting \$2MM communications campaign launched in three pilot areas in the fall of 2008, with more broad roll-out in spring / summer 2009.

For additional background from the first phase of the project, including pet acquisition and altering rates, visit [www.humanesociety.org/gulfcoastphase1report](http://www.humanesociety.org/gulfcoastphase1report).



## Project Partners

***The Humane Society of the United States*** – a combination of staff and departments bringing expertise in economic and marketing research, companion animal issues and field/regional services.

***Priority Ventures Group*** – 20 years experience helping organizations get better results through improved strategy and marketing. Clients also include ASPCA, PetSmart Charities, United Animal Nations and Farm Sanctuary.

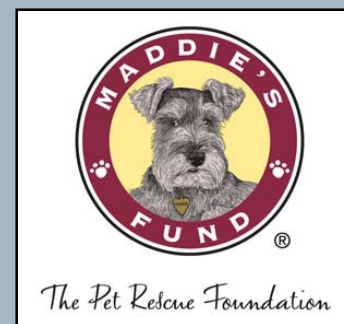
***Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research*** – 25 years helping organizations strengthen their communications and campaigns by understanding key audiences. Clients include Int'l Committee of the Red Cross, NRDC and NPR.

***illume Communications*** –a full-service polyethnic marketing and advertising firm specializing in research- based creative strategies. illume's client roster includes Kennedy Krieger Institute, Safe Streets & Maryland Department of Health.



## After Katrina: Improving the Lives of Gulf Coast Dogs and Cats

A joint project of



A special Thank You to Maddie's Fund for their commitment to data driven solutions to companion animal overpopulation. Several key components of the project research, including a census of shelter intake, focus groups and a telephone survey of pet owners were made possible through a \$ 999,700 grant from Maddie's Fund as part of the "After Katrina" project.

A special Thank You to shelters and pet owners across Louisiana and Mississippi for their participation and insights.



# Research Approach And Applicability





## Research Approach

Research activities addressed the following questions:

- What is the status of dogs and cats in Louisiana and Mississippi?
- Why don't people spay and neuter? What will it take to motivate them?
- Will proposed communications work?





## **What Is the Status of Dogs and Cats in Louisiana and Mississippi?**

### **Goals**

- Measure prevalence of pet ownership and spay/neuter
- Explore characteristics of owners who do/do not spay and neuter
- Assess the extent of pet overpopulation
- Establish baseline and track animal shelter intake and outcomes over campaign

### **Methods**

#### *Inventory of Pet Owners (Oct-Nov. 2006)*

- 779 cat and dog owners in Louisiana and Mississippi
- Random digit dialed telephone survey with additional cell phone sample in Orleans and Jefferson parishes. Representative, weighted.

#### *Shelter Census (May 2007 – ongoing)*

- 57 animal shelters across Louisiana and Mississippi representing 91% of annual animal intake
- Asilomar Accord level data 2005 through 2010



## What Is the Status of Dogs and Cats in Louisiana and Mississippi?

This research confirmed observations during the Katrina recovery that spay / neuter rates are lower in this region than for the U.S. on average. Intake and euthanasia rates per human thousand are higher.

	Louisiana & Mississippi	Nationwide	
Dog Ownership	42%	39%	↑
Cat Ownership	21%	34%	↓
Dogs Spayed/Neutered	51%	70%	↓
Cats Spayed/Neutered	77%	84%	↓
Intake Per Thousand	37.4 (MS) 29.9 (LA)	23.3	↑
Euthanasia Per Thousand	24.9 (MS) 21.4 (LA)	12.5	↑
Asilomar Tracking (annual)	87% (MS) 94% (LA)	< 1%?	↑



## **Why Don't People Spay and Neuter? What Will It Take to Motivate Them?**

### **Goals**

- Explore attitudes toward spay / neuter and obstacles to getting procedure
- Assess reactions to potential message concepts
- Test existing print and TV media pieces (8 print pieces, 6 PSAs, focus groups only)
- Test effectiveness of potential spokespeople and message delivery vehicles
- Identify persuadable target groups and strategies to reach them

### **Methods**

#### *Qualitative Research: Focus Groups (June 2007)*

- Eight focus groups broadly representative of region's geographic and racial diversity
  - Six groups had unaltered pets: four with Caucasians, two with African Americans
  - Two groups had spayed or neutered pets: both were mixed race groups

#### *Social Marketing Survey (Sept-Oct. 2007)*

- 964 pet owners with at least one unaltered cat or dog, excluding professional breeders. Includes 875 dog owners and 425 cat owners (adds to > 964 due to multi-pet households)
- Random digit dial telephone survey. Data weighted to accurately reflect population 12



## **Will Proposed Communications Work?**

### **Goals**

- Test and refine messages
- Determine knowledge of terms
- Obtain feedback on how messages are presented
- Track which media venues and outreach efforts generate the most surgeries

### **Methods**

#### *Qualitative Research: Creative Testing (September 2008)*

- 41 in-depth individual interviews
- Participants were weighted toward lower income and represented region's racial mix.
- Breeders and those firmly opposed to spay / neuter were excluded.

#### *Pilot Market Implementation & Evaluation (November 2008 - March 2009)*

- Three pilot markets tracking campaign response: Shreveport, LA; Jackson, MS; Gulfport, MS



## Applicability

Top research findings were consistent across age, income, race, and education as well as for differing pet owner characteristics such as history of litters. The outcomes were also similar between Louisiana and Mississippi and within different geographical areas of the two states.

These results suggest that **the findings apply beyond the Gulf region and can guide decisions on spay / neuter programs and promotion nationwide.**





# Increasing Spay / Neuter

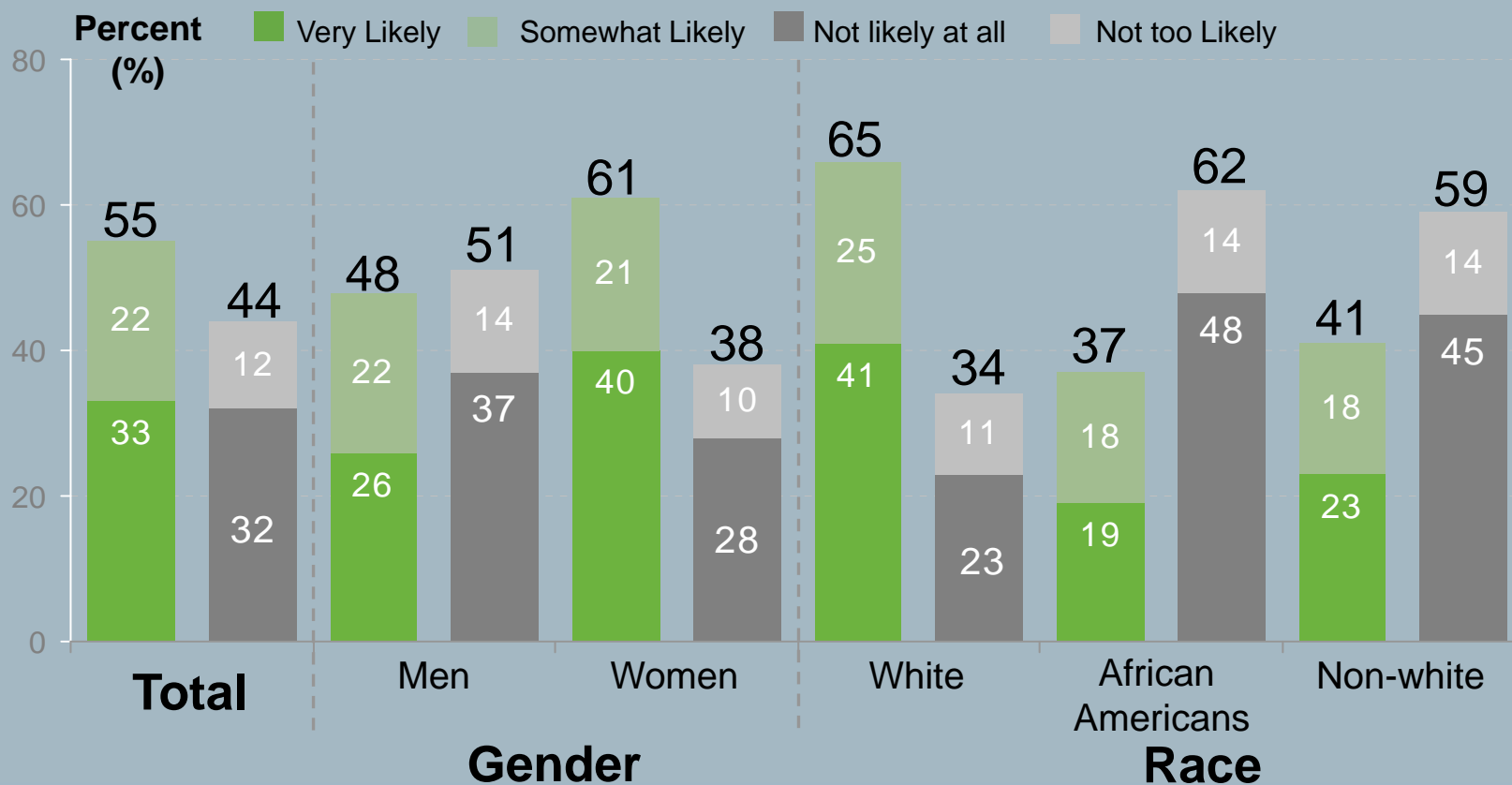
- **Determine the target audience**
  - Capture “low-hanging fruit” of people not strongly opposed
  - Check that people with altered animals don’t have unaltered at home
- Decrease the barriers
- Define the message
- Design the communications
- Direct the outreach





## Good News - the Majority of Owners Were Already Interested in Spay / Neuter

*A lot of people do not spay or neuter any of their pets. How about you? How likely are you to spay or neuter your pet or pets?  
Would you say very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, not likely at all?*



## Capture the Low Hanging Fruit

The team grouped reasons for not spaying and neutering by how much owners were opposed to the procedure. Many people indicated practical barriers of cost or insufficient engagement in the issue, rather than resistance.

**The HSUS campaign prioritizes owners like this as “low hanging fruit,” the primary group that the communications should mobilize.**

*Which one or two of these reasons best describes why you have not spayed, neutered or fixed your dog so it can't have puppies – Up to two responses per respondent, so percents across this and next slides add to more than 100%.*

Reasons people don't spay/neuter	Unaltered Dog %	Unaltered Cat %
<b>Low Hanging Fruit</b>		
It costs too much	17	27
I have not gotten around to it	13	17
I have never thought about it	11	12
Not sure where to go to get my pet fixed + Can't get there	2	3

## Reasons Owners Have Not Altered Their Pets (continued)

Although the campaign doesn't target highly opposed owners, many responded well to proposed messages and will spay and neuter as a result of communications.

*Which one or two of these reasons best describes why you have not spayed, neutered or fixed your dog so it can't have puppies – Up to two responses per respondent, so percents across this and prior slides add to more than 100%.*

Reasons (cont'd)	Unaltered Dog %	Unaltered Cat %
<b>Middle Group</b>		
Not loose/uncontrolled / no need	26	11
My pet is too young / old/ health	2	5
<b>High Hanging Fruit</b>		
I want to breed my pet	25	8
It would be cruel or unnatural	11	9
I am concerned it would change personality or behavior	10	6
<b>Don't Know+ Refused+ Other:</b> Those with no reason may be low fruit	8	22



## **Determine the Target Audience - Other Factors**

- Low income owners and African-Americans were initially less likely to spay or neuter their animals. However, after hearing survey messages, they showed the greatest gains in intent to spay / neuter. These groups are therefore a priority target of the communications campaign because of the potential of greatly increasing the rate of spay and neuter for pets in these households.
- Best practices in spay / neuter outreach include targeting the message to neighborhoods that account for a disproportionate share of intake, especially for puppies and kittens. In the pilot phase of the project, local humane organizations used their data to define areas for events and leaf-letting.
- Owners with both altered and unaltered pets show the highest rate of interest in spay/neuter of unaltered animals in the home, before any kind of messaging. Veterinarians, especially, have an opportunity to discuss “other pets” as this segment reports a high rate (77%) of regular checkups.



# Increasing Spay / Neuter

- Determine the target audience
- **Decrease the barriers**
  - Ensure enough low-cost spay / neuter
  - Address the trust barrier
- Define the message
- Design the communications
- Direct the outreach



## **Ensure Enough Low Cost Spay / Neuter**

**Cost is a significant barrier to increasing the prevalence of spaying and neutering.**

*..cost represents the leading reason why cat owners do not spay and neuter and ranks fairly high among dog owners as well. Asked more directly, 42 percent agree (27 percent strongly agree) with the statement, “spaying and neutering simply costs too much for me.”*

*-Greenberg, Quinlan Rosner Research; October 2007*

**Providing sufficient low-cost surgery capacity is, therefore, crucial before undertaking an outreach campaign.**

- The HSUS in partnership with other national groups including ASPCA®, International Fund for Animal Welfare®, Maddie’s Fund®, PetSmart Charities® & United Animal Nations® invested in the region as part of post-Katrina efforts.
- The HSUS campaign has targeted investments to facilitate additional low-cost capacity.



## **Cost as a Barrier**

**Quotes from focus group participants show how much cost is perceived as a barrier.**

- These comments were made before the current economic downturn.

*“It’s expensive too. You’re looking at \$50, \$60, \$75 depending on the size of the animal.”*

*“I have lots of medical expenses...I have medicines I can’t actually afford on a monthly basis, so this would take precedence over that. There’s a real cost issue.”*





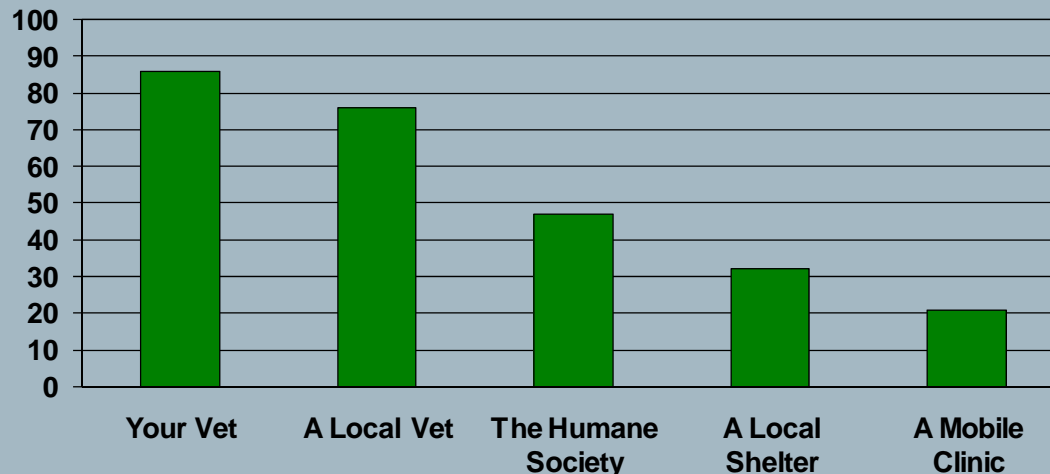
## Address the Trust Barrier

**Unfortunately, owners may not equate low cost with high quality.**

- To overcome the trust barrier, staff, facilities & communications need to demonstrate the professionalism that owners seek in order to commit to a medical procedure for their pets.*

*Assume in each place the procedure would be performed by a licensed veterinarian using the best medicines and endorsed by the Humane Society. Would you trust them a lot, some, only a little or not at all to do a good job spaying or neutering your pet?*

**Trust "A Lot" (percent %)**





# Increasing Spay / Neuter

- Determine the target audience
- Decrease the barriers
- **Define the message**
  - Lead with euthanasia, not cost
  - Make the message personal
  - Use practical reasons with cat-only owners selectively
- Design the communications
- Direct the outreach



## Which Message Is Most Convincing With Owners of Unaltered Pets?

Health Benefits?

Low-cost Spay/Neuter  
is Available?

Danger of Strays?  
Public Impact?

Overpopulation?

Hassle of Litters?

Behavior Benefits?  
Roaming?

Say It All?

## Most and Least Convincing Messages

**Although humane personnel have succeeded with a variety of educational messages, research showed that some are more effective than others.**

### Most Convincing\*

**59%** Statement with euthanasia statistics including a comment about offspring of “own” pet

### Least Convincing\*

**34%** Statement that spay/neutering could help pet live longer, healthier life, prevents certain cancers

*\*Percent responding message is “very convincing” reason to spay or neuter own pet. Survey participants rated all messages one at a time for how convincing it is.*

## Most and Least Convincing Messages: Detailed

**Highest to lowest by percent rated “very convincing” on an individual message basis. Interviewees were split to test effectiveness of nuanced messages, e.g. purebred puppies in euthanasia message.**

1. A quarter of a million pets enter animal shelters in Mississippi and Louisiana every year. More than half of pets in these shelters are put to sleep or euthanized because shelters are overcrowded and pets cannot be placed in homes. The offspring of your pet could end up in these shelters. Spaying and neutering helps reduce the number of unwanted pets and pet deaths.
2. A quarter of a million pets enter animal shelters in Mississippi and Louisiana every year including the puppies of pure bred pets. More than half of pets in these shelters are put to sleep or euthanized because shelters are overcrowded and pets cannot be placed in homes. The offspring of your pet could end up in these shelters. Spaying and neutering helps reduce the number of unwanted pets and pet deaths. (Rates #1 with those that shift to more likely to spay/neuter after hearing the messages) (57%)
3. Even though you are responsible, your pet may accidentally get out of your house, breed with other animals and produce strays. Strays can become a danger to the community, by spreading disease, biting people or fighting with other animals. You can reduce the number of strays by spaying and neutering your pets.
4. If your female pet has a litter, you have to find homes for all the offspring and pay to feed them. Spaying is the best way to ensure you do not have to deal with any unwanted litters.
5. Real men take responsibility for their children; real dogs can't. Some people think it is cruel and unnatural to neuter a dog, but it is far crueler to have to kill his puppies because no one can take care of them.

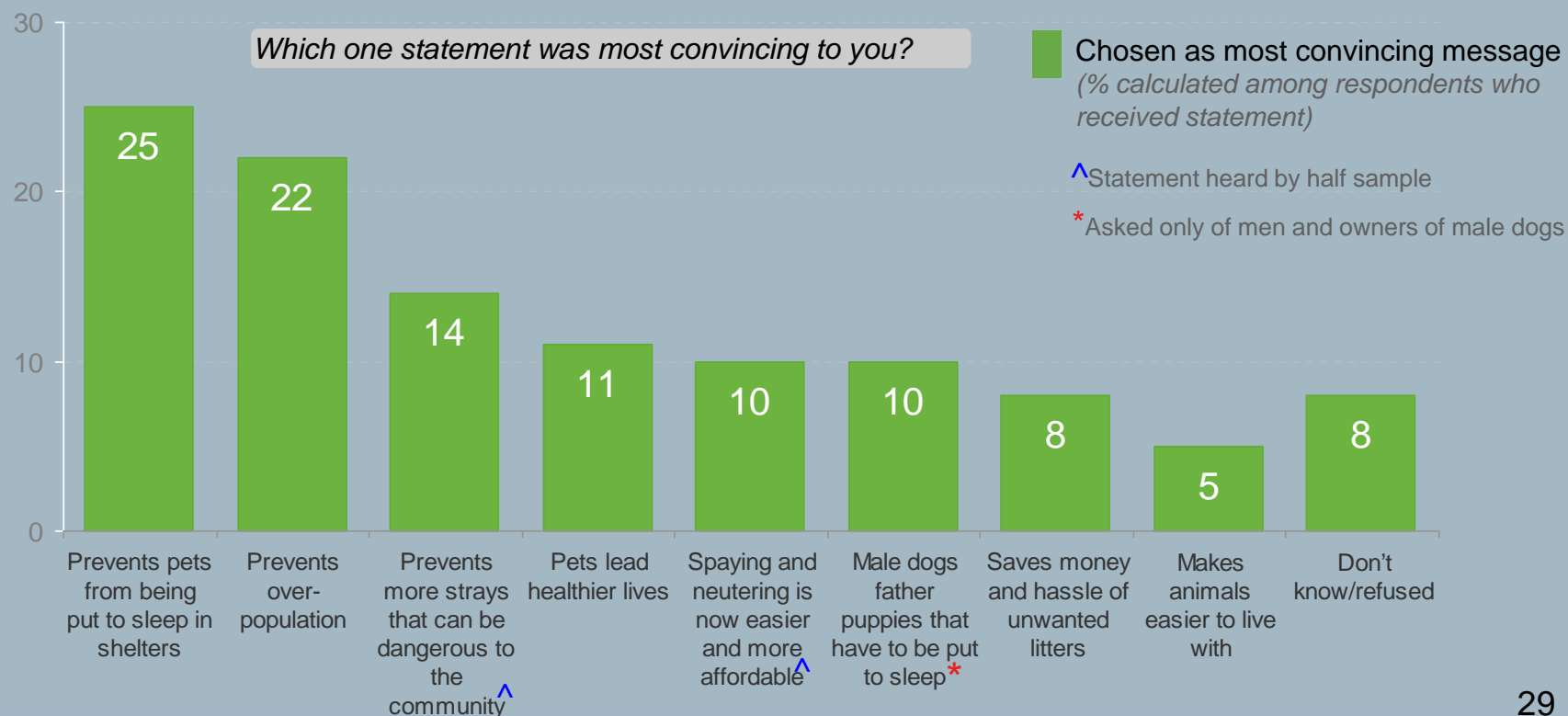
## Most and Least Convincing Messages (cont'd):

6. Over its lifetime, your cat or dog can have many babies. A female animal that is not fixed can have over 100 babies and male animals can literally father thousands. Every one of us needs to spay or neuter our pets to help reduce the number of unwanted pets.
7. Spaying and neutering makes life easier around your home. Female pets won't go into heat, so there's no howling or need for messy diapers.
8. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, spaying and neutering could help your pet live a longer and healthier life. Spaying and neutering pets can prevent cancer and other life threatening illnesses such as prostate disease.
9. Spaying or neutering your pet early on can save you a lot of money down the road. You won't have to care for unwanted litters and you will spend less money providing medical treatment for your pets since spayed or neutered pets also have fewer health problems.
10. Spaying and neutering can improve the behavior of your pet. It calms them down and makes them less likely to roam. Spayed and neutered pets are less likely to bite and fight, and are also less likely to make your house messy with spraying.
11. Getting your pet spayed or neutered is now easier and more affordable. There is a campaign underway in (MISSISSIPPI/LOUISIANA) that provides discounts for people who cannot afford to spay and neuter their pet.
12. Spaying and neutering could help your pet live a longer and healthier life. Spaying and neutering pets can prevent cancer and other life threatening illnesses such as prostate disease.



## Most Convincing Messages = Euthanasia & Overpopulation

When asked to choose ONE most compelling message, euthanasia, followed closely by pet overpopulation, was most influential.







## Euthanasia Doesn't Reflect on Shelters

**When developing ads and other communications, the team focused on preserving the link between euthanasia and spay/neuter. Pilot city animal shelters report no misdirected blame toward them. Shelters, animal control officers and advocates are working together in the three pilots cities to bring this message to the community and to influence spay/neuter decisions. A television and radio ad presents directly from the shelter perspective. The final section of this report includes sample materials from the campaign and a link to the complete set.**

*"[We] have not received any negative feedback directed at us or any of the welfare organizations. I have received an overwhelming amount of response however what I have heard has been positive...[The campaign] has provided us a "conversation starter" with the community about spay/neutering and euthanasia."* -Matthew Pepper, Director, Caddo Parish Animal Services, Shreveport, LA March 2009

*"So many of our patrons have said that they just didn't realize the scope of the problem and how important it is to spay and neuter pets. Talking about the problem has prompted people to do their part and have their pets spayed or neutered. We are so grateful for the opportunity to shed some light on this subject and to see positive results."* -Ellen Buntyn, Director of Operations, Humane Society of South Mississippi, Gulfport, MS March 2009 [Shelter with a spay neuter clinic]



## **Make the Message Personal**

**Although many owners are concerned about euthanasia, they may feel they are not part of the problem.**

- Most pet owners who do not spay/neuter believe they are “responsible” pet owners who keep their pets in controlled environments and, therefore, are not contributing to the problem.
- People connect emotionally to the problem, but do not think they are contributing to the problem.

- Focus Group Report, GQRR, August 2007



## Most Effective Message

A quarter of a million pets enter animal shelters in Mississippi and Louisiana every year including the puppies of purebred dogs. More than two-thirds of these homeless pets are put to sleep or euthanized. Your pet's puppies and kittens\* could end up euthanized or suffering in the streets.\*\* Spaying and neutering helps reduce the number of unwanted pets and pet deaths.

*\*After focus groups revealed that many owners do not believe they are part of the problem, survey testing used messages stating that their pet's puppies or kittens could be euthanized, in order to help them make the connection.*

*\*\*Phrase on "suffering in the streets" was added after research, so that owners wouldn't conclude it was better to release a pet rather than relinquish to a shelter. References to shelter overcrowding and the lack of available homes were also deleted to keep the focus on the impact on spay-neuter, shelter intake and euthanasia.*

## Make the Message Personal

Many of the ad concepts developed address this finding by linking euthanasia to their pets' potential offspring. In testing, participants got the connection.



“It probably makes you think  
should I have my dog neutered or  
spayed? Is my dog under control?  
What does my dog do when I’m  
not watching him?”

“...so you think well my dog had  
puppies, so I gave them away, I  
wonder where they went, did they  
have to go to a home to get  
euthanized. It makes you think.”

“This is a good question. I really  
don’t know.”

## Cost as Lead Message - Not Effective

Although cost is a critical issue to address, leading with cost isn't as effective as emphasizing the importance of preventing euthanasia.

- Only 10% of owners of unaltered pets cited low-cost & convenience as the most convincing message.
- However, providing information on the availability of low-cost spay / neuter as part of a promotional piece is important.
- The following ad leads with cost and is therefore not recommended.



## **Use Practical Reasons With Cat-only Owners Selectively**

**Owners with cats only also responded well to practical considerations such as dealing with a female in heat.**

- Cat-only households represent only 8% of the survey base, therefore employ this message selectively in one-on-one outreach to cat owners or other situations that may include a disproportionate share of people with only cats at home.
- Most persuasive message is “Spaying and neutering makes life easier around your home. Female pets won't go into heat, so there's no howling or need for messy diapers.”
- More likely to view cost as a barrier than owners of unaltered pets generally.
- Only 36% of these households go to the vet regularly vs. 66% of all households with unaltered pets.



# Increasing Spay / Neuter

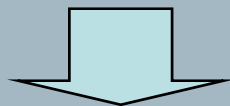
- Determine the target audience
- Decrease the barriers
- Define the message
- **Design the communications**
  - Use local statistics
  - Respect the owners
  - Be serious, professional
  - Use clear, accepted language
- Direct the outreach



## Use Local Statistics

**In interviews to test communications materials, euthanasia statistics were highly effective in motivating people to spay or neuter.**

- Messaging with larger, annual (vs. daily) calculations has the most impact. Numbers are preferred to percentages.
- Participants focused on the words and information shared versus imagery. Images were secondary, if mentioned at all.
- Reactions to messaging were primarily consistent across most [demographic groups]; only slight differences surfaced among more educated pet owners.



**Many [people interviewed] are reconsidering their initial position not to spay or neuter as a result of participating [in the research].**



## Use Local Statistics

**Including state-specific data made the message even more relevant and compelling.**

- People view the exposure to the state specific numbers as education and new information, versus a lecture or critique of the region.

**“Speaking specifically about Mississippi is good because there is a real problem here in this state”**

**“This will get noticed and it is good to bring it home to Mississippi versus generalizing or applying to the country overall.”**

**“I would like to see Louisiana at the front of this statement. That would get people’s attention because you’re talking about our state, not just in general. Things are different here than other places”**

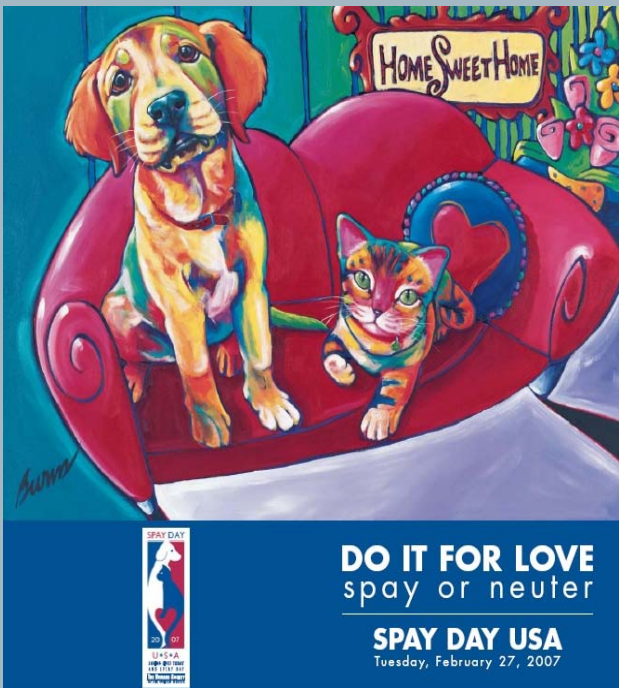
**“That is very direct and is good, needs to be. It’s a sad amount. I’ve never seen a number..that’s sad. Lets you know two numbers, the intake and the result”**



## Respect the Owners

People with unaltered animals love their pets and feel they are responsible owners.

Messaging needs to tap pet owners' caring for their pets and for animals in general, rather than creating guilt or finger wagging.



**“You are never home alone. There is always somebody to talk to.”**

Shreveport, Caucasian, does not spay/neuter

**“They are a lot of company. I mean they are loving and love you unconditionally.”**

New Orleans, African American, does not spay/neuter



**“Just because I don’t have my pet spayed or neutered does that mean I don’t love him?”**

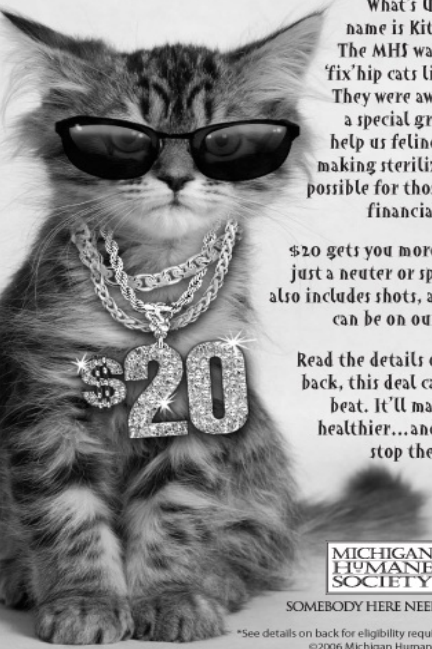
Jackson, Caucasian, does not spay/neuter



## Respect the Owners

Be careful of anything that might inadvertently offend.

**Take the Bling out of their Thing!**



What's Up? My name is Kitty-MC. The MHJ wants to 'fix' hip cats like me. They were awarded a special grant to help us feline kind, making sterilization possible for those in a financial bind.

\$20 gets you more than just a neuter or spay—it also includes shots, and we can be on our way!

Read the details on the back, this deal can't be beat. It'll make me healthier...and even stop the heat!

**MICHIGAN HUMANE SOCIETY**

SOMEBODY HERE NEEDS YOU.

\*See details on back for eligibility requirements.  
©2006 Michigan Humane Society



**“I see it as being very disrespectful to us as a young, black male.”**

Jackson, African American, does not spay/neuter



## Be Serious, Professional

Cute – May help obtain volunteers or donors, but doesn't speak to targets

- People see spay / neuter as a serious decision and want the issue presented to them seriously.
- Humor, sexual innuendo & illustrations can be counterproductive.

When viewing an adorable television ad (frame below), participants wondered where to get one of “those dogs” [French Bulldog] and wondered “who wouldn't want one of those puppies?” *They didn't discuss spay / neuter.*



**“It's very cute, but not convincing.”**

Shreveport, Caucasian, does not spay/neuter

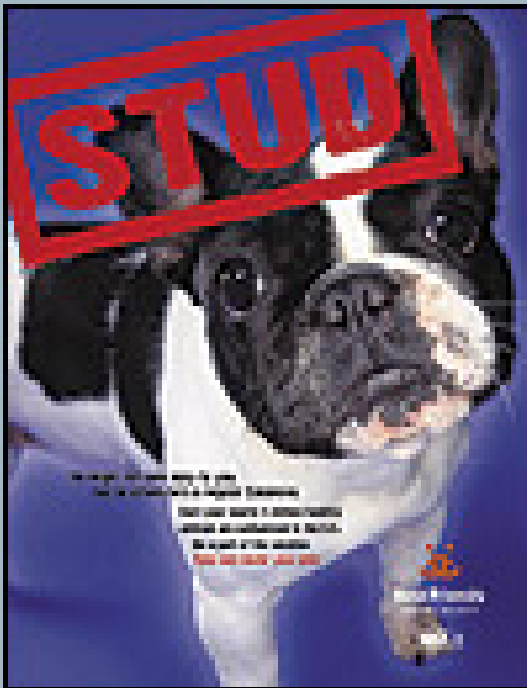
**“It's supposed to be a serious decision that you're making. That's too silly”** [referring to another piece with cartoon animals].

Jackson, Caucasian, does not spay/neuter



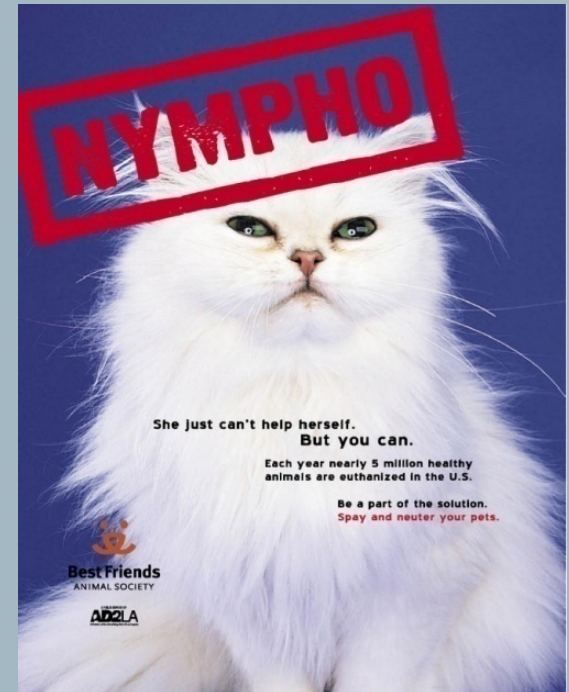
## Cute can sabotage the message.

Animals that are too “good looking” worked against the messaging. Respondents questioned why you would get such beautiful animals fixed.



“I know the point is they’re trying to say, look, this dog is going to father a whole bunch of babies that aren’t wanted. But that’s not what I see. I see, you are just as cute as you can be.”

Shreveport, Caucasian, does not spay/neuter







## Use Clear, Accepted Language

Spay and Neuter: Most people knew these terms across research efforts.

In Heat: Ad testing participants responded negatively to this phrase, although the reaction may be regional. The term “in season” was felt to be less sexually explicit and was recommended by participants.

Euthanize: This term was not specifically studied in the quantitative surveys where phrasing “euthanized or put to sleep” was used in statements and questions. In ad testing, only 59% were familiar with the term “euthanized.”

*Although nearly everyone is familiar with the phrase “put to sleep”, most prefer “put down” since the animals will not wake up and other terms such as put to death, kill or destroy may be considered more violent or unintentional.*

- illumine Communications, October 2008



# Increasing Spay / Neuter

- Determine the target audience
- Decrease the barriers
- Define the message
- Design the communications
- **Direct the outreach**
  - Choose credible spokespeople
  - Include brochures and community presentations
  - Offer practical incentives such as rabies clinics
  - Find owners at big box retail





## Choose Credible Spokespeople

Focus group participants expressed considerable skepticism about celebrity spokespeople and questioned their motivation (e.g., are they getting paid) and comments.

- Celebrity spokespeople should have a public, long history with animal protection advocacy - GQRR Focus Group Report

**I'm not going to buy something or do something or have something done because of Carrie Underwood or Dale Earnhardt, Jr. or whomever says that is the thing to do. My first thing is, what do they specifically know about the subject matter?**

Shreveport, Caucasian, does not spay/neuter



***It Pays to Spay (or neuter)***

Thanks to eBay Giving Works' Holiday Dreams fund-raising event, HSSM will receive 400 special gifts, donated in the name of *LeAnn Rimes, international country music star*.

Because of the generosity of LeAnn Rimes, the Humane Society of South Mississippi invites you to give a gift of health and life to your pet and the community.

Spay or Neuter your pet this holiday season and your pet will receive a special holiday gift.

This is a limited holiday offer for the first 400 pets spayed or neutered at the HSSM beginning December 11, 2006.

**Book your pet's surgery today by calling 228-863-4394 ext. 131.**

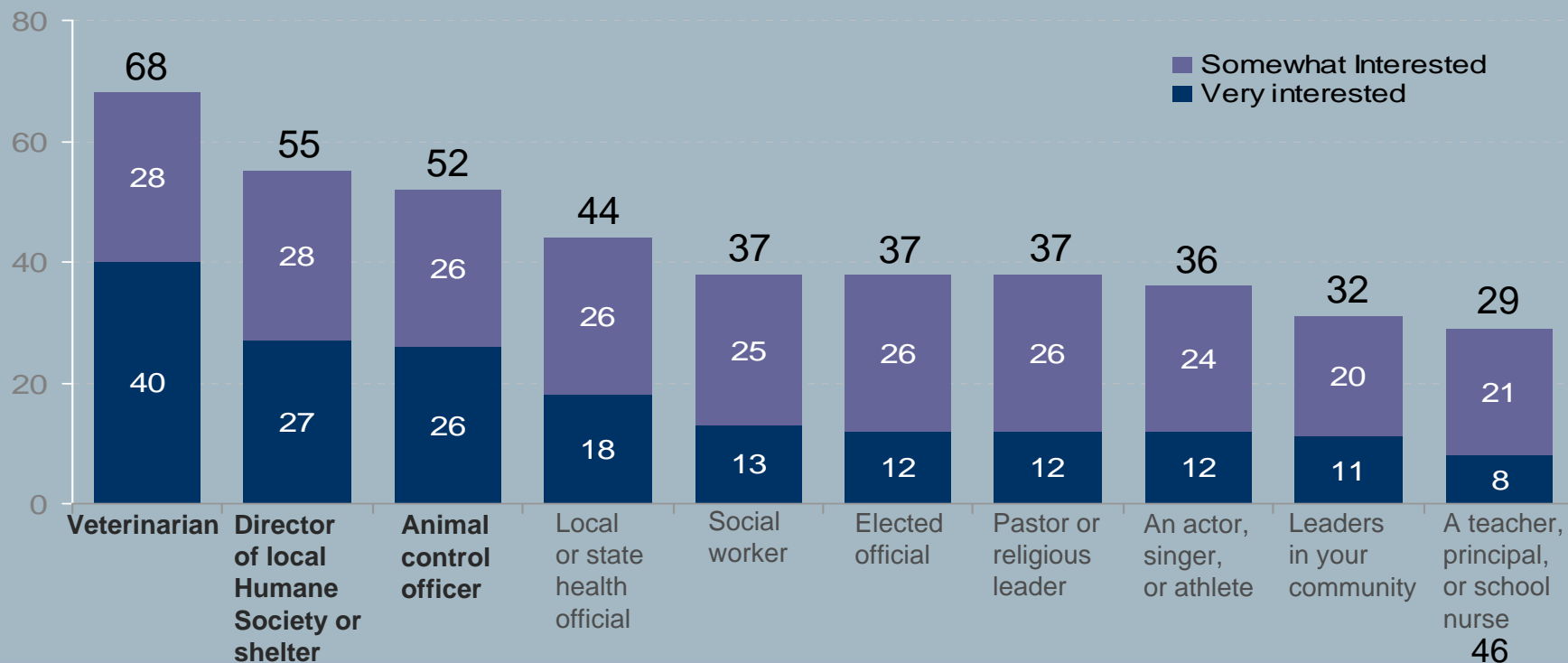
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## Choose Credible Spokespeople

Owners were much more interested in hearing from veterinarians and humane personnel.

Interest in Spokespeople for Spay and Neuter Campaign (%)





## Humane organizations highly credible

**The “Humane Society” brand is powerful and helps build trust.**

*Participants in every group raised the Humane Society (whether they mean local or national) as a group where they would seek out spaying and neutering services and would trust for information about the procedure. They also noted that they would be more likely to trust “cheap” spaying and neutering services if they came from the Humane Society.*

- Greenberg Quinlan Rosner

**They’re not doing it to make money. They’re doing it for the right reasons.**

New Orleans, Caucasian, does not spay/neuter

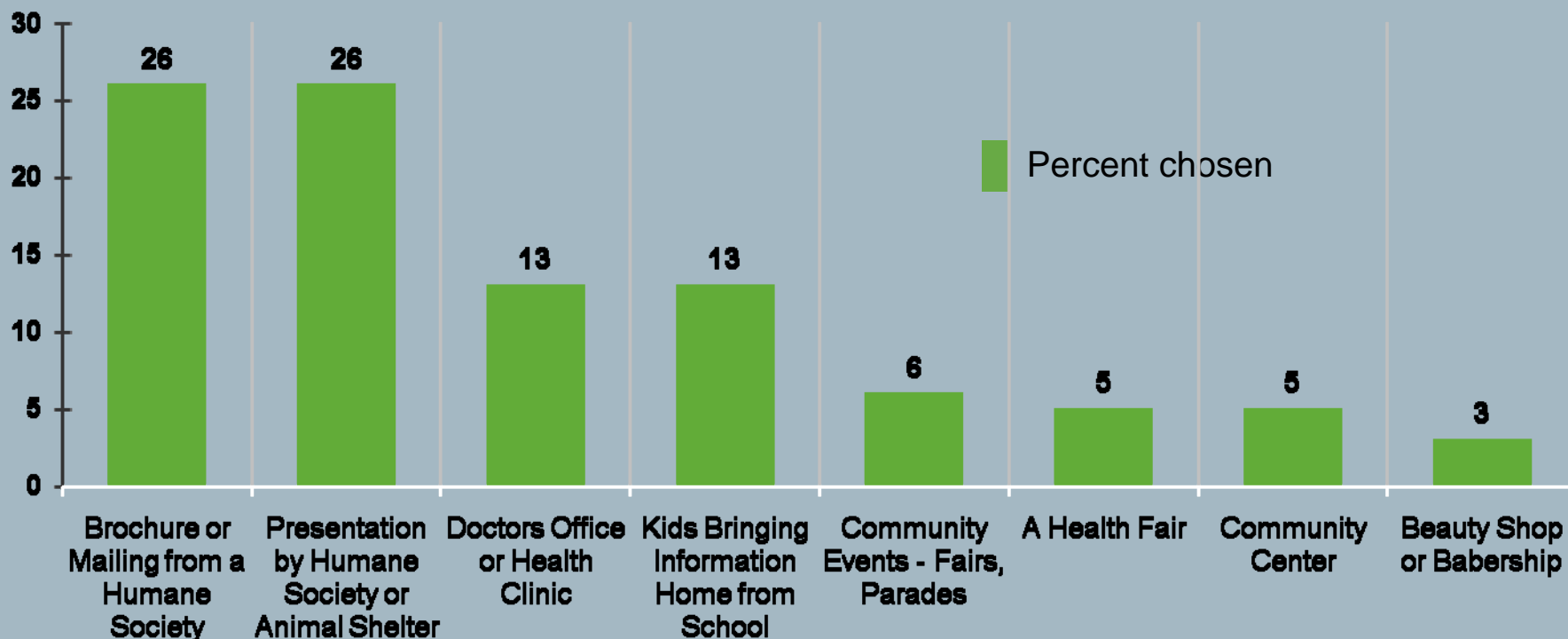
**“...it would just give you a better feeling I would think. It’s this big group and it’s not just this little place over here that you are going to give them \$10 and who knows what happens.”**

Shreveport, Caucasian, does not spay/neuter



## Include Brochures and Community Presentations

*In which ONE or TWO of the following places would you be most open to hearing information about spaying and neutering?*

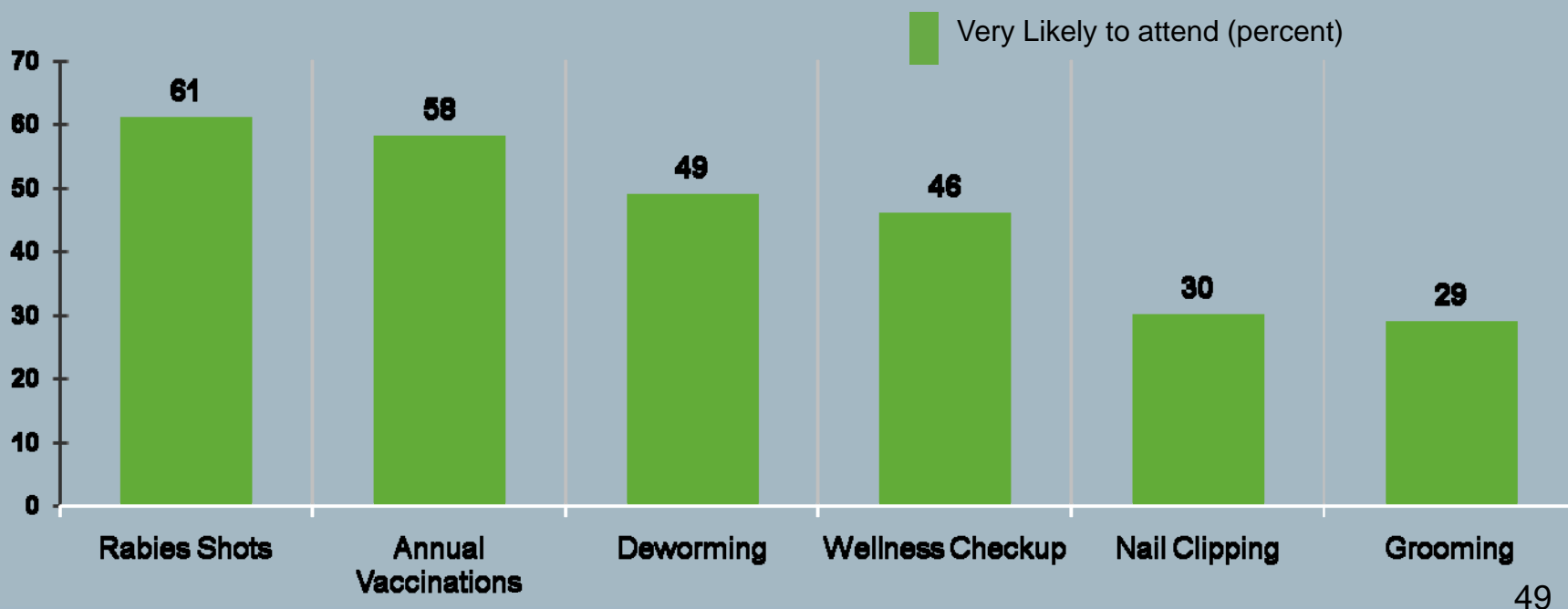




## Focus on Practical Incentives to Encourage Event Attendance

Events like rabies clinics are a good way to engage with owners of unaltered pets. Less practical items, such as grooming, are not as attractive.

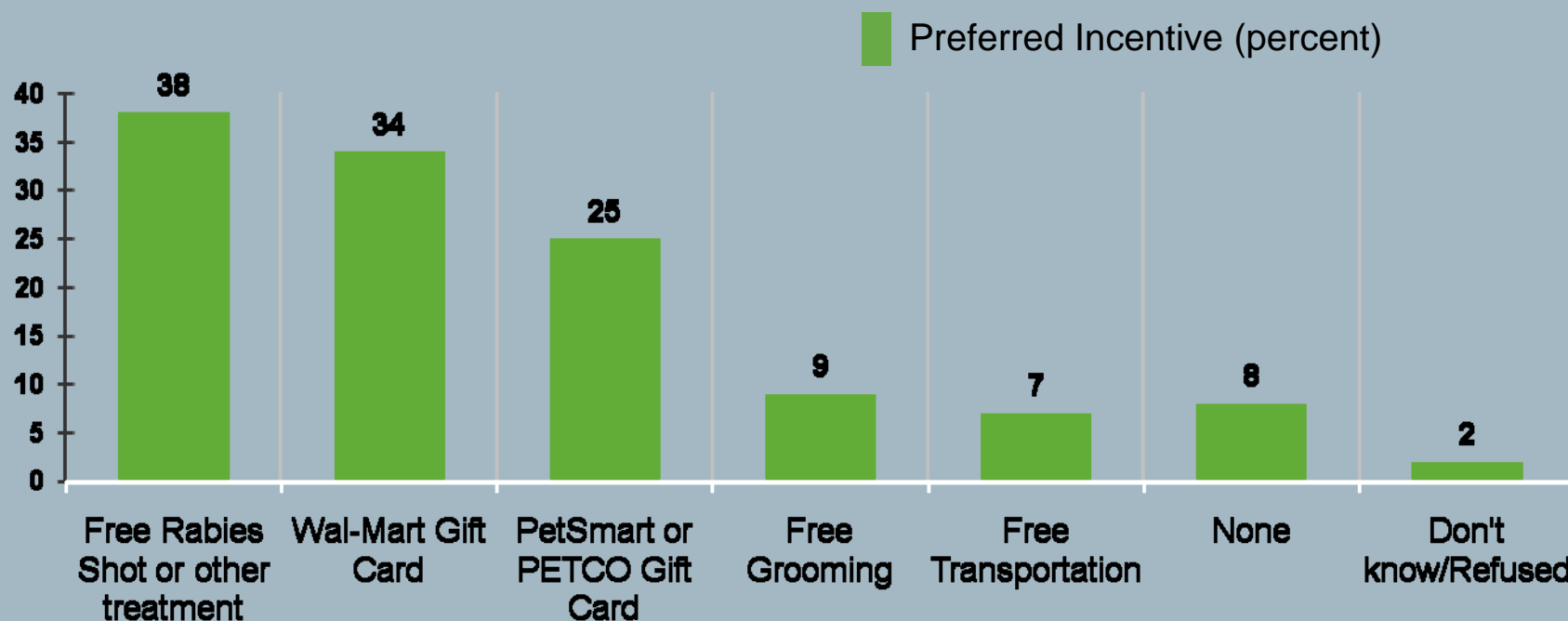
*How likely would you be to attend an event that offered free or discounted ...*





## Practical Items Rate Best as Incentives To Spay and Neuter

*Some groups in this community may begin to offer incentives for people to spay and neuter their pets. Which one or two of the following incentives would you be most interested in:?*

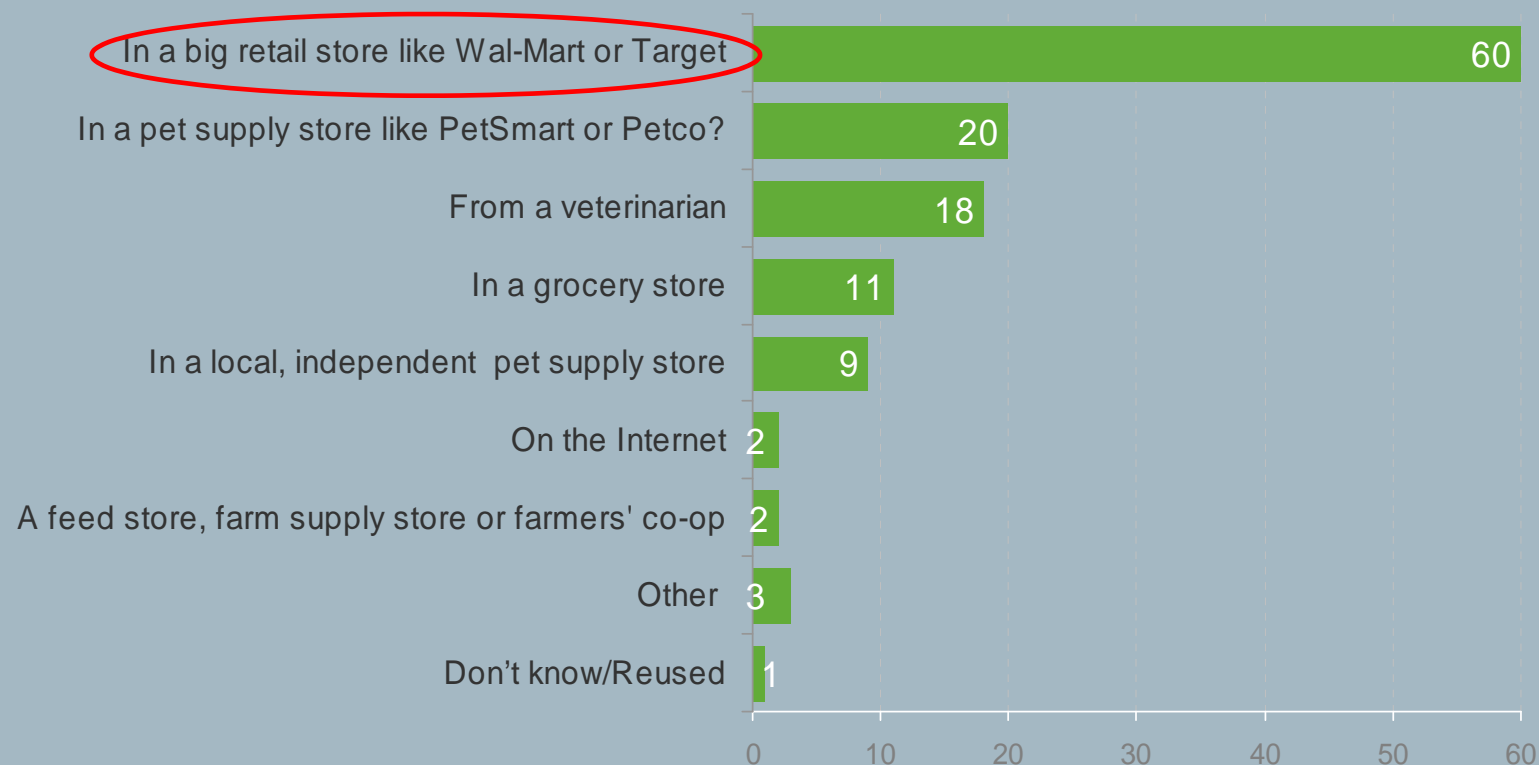




## Find Owners at Big Box Retail

*Where do you buy most of your pet supplies?*

Buy most of their pet supplies (%)





# Increasing Spay / Neuter

## Summary

- Determine the target audience
  - Capture “low-hanging fruit” & those not strongly opposed
  - Check that people with altered animals don’t have unaltered at home
- Decrease the barriers
  - Ensure enough low-cost spay/neuter capacity
  - Address the trust barrier: demonstrate professionalism- staff, facilities, website & communications
- Define the message
  - Lead with euthanasia, not cost. Focus on top message.
  - Make the message personal by linking to “their” pet
  - Use practical considerations regarding being in heat or season selectively for owners with cats only



Puppies at Southern Pines  
Animal Shelter, Hattiesburg, MS





# Increasing Spay / Neuter

## Summary (continued)

- Design the communications
  - Use state statistics where available
  - Respect the owners; they love their pets and consider themselves responsible
  - Be serious, professional: avoid cute, catchy or funny approaches & sexual innuendo
  - Use clear, accepted language: euthanasia may not be widely known
- Direct the outreach
  - Choose credible spokespeople: humane personnel and organizations rather than celebrities
  - Include brochures and community presentations
  - Offer practical incentives such as rabies clinics
  - Find owners at big box retail (if in your area)



# Campaign Materials

The sample promotional materials in the following pages reflect the summary points, including euthanasia message, link to pet owner, use of local statistics and serious tone that research revealed would be most effective.

Please visit [www.humanesociety.org/spayneutercampaign](http://www.humanesociety.org/spayneutercampaign) to watch the television ads, listen to the radio ads and view all campaign materials. Resources and materials will be made available for adaptation for broader use Summer 2009.

## Billboards

**IN MISSISSIPPI, 73,000 HOMELESS  
PETS ARE PUT DOWN EACH YEAR.**

***WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR CAT'S KITTENS?***

**[ Please Spay or Neuter Your Pets ]**

**call 866-901-SPAY**



## Billboards

# WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR DOG'S PUPPIES?

IN MISSISSIPPI, 73,000 HOMELESS PETS ARE PUT DOWN EACH YEAR.

[ Please Spay or Neuter Your Pets ]

call **866-901-SPAY**



## Posters

*Louisiana shelters can't save and support the huge number of accidental litters, strays and family pets brought to the shelter door everyday.*

*Call your vet or local Spay/Neuter organization. Affordable assistance is available..... Save this number to your cell*

THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES

**IN LOUISIANA, 130,000 HOMELESS  
PETS ENTER SHELTERS EACH YEAR,  
92,000 ARE PUT DOWN.**

**[ Please Spay or Neuter Your Pets ]**

Louisiana shelters can't save and support the huge number of accidental litters, strays and family pets brought to the shelter door everyday.

ROBINSON'S RESCUE  
ALLIANCE FOR PREVENTION  
OF HOMELESS ANIMALS

Call your vet or local Spay/Neuter organization.  
Affordable assistance is available.  
**861-0101**  
Save this number to your cell  
[www.robinsonrescue.org](http://www.robinsonrescue.org)



## Door hangers for Animal Control & Targeted Outreach



*Thank You 2008 Louisiana Animal  
Control Officers' Association  
Meeting Attendees for requesting /  
recommending this piece.*

(Reverse Side)



In Mississippi, 109,000 homeless pets enter shelters every year...73,000 are put to sleep, thousands more suffer in our streets.

As difficult as it is to do, healthy, good-natured dogs, cats, puppies and kittens are put down at an alarming rate. Mississippi shelters can't save and support the huge number of accidental litters, strays and family pets brought to the shelter door everyday.

***You can reduce these numbers  
by Spaying and Neutering  
your pets.***

Call your vet or your local spay/neuter organization. Affordable assistance is available.



**Humane Society of South Mississippi**  
2615 Hwy. 49 Gulfport, MS 39501  
Call 863-4394 (Option 2)  
or [www.hssm.org](http://www.hssm.org)



*Spanish Translation Available*

## Postcards for Animal Control Officers and Other Street Level Outreach

In Mississippi, 109,000 homeless pets enter shelters each year... 73,000 are put to sleep, thousands more suffer in our streets. As difficult as it is to do, healthy, good-natured dogs, cats, puppies and kittens, are put down at an alarming rate. Mississippi shelters can't save and support the huge number of accidental litters, strays and family pets brought to the shelter door everyday.

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Call your vet or your local spay/neuter organization. Affordable assistance is available.



**Humane Society of South Mississippi**

2615 Hwy. 49 Gulfport, MS 39501

Call 863-4394 (Option 2) or [www.hssm.org](http://www.hssm.org)



THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES

IN MISSISSIPPI,  
**73,000**  
PETS ARE PUT  
DOWN EVERY YEAR.

*Help Prevent Overpopulation*

**[ Please Spay/Neuter Your Pets ]**

◀ **WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT AFFORDABLE  
SPAY/NEUTER OPPORTUNITIES IN YOUR AREA?  
SEE REVERSE SIDE.**



THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES

EN MISSISSIPPI,  
**73,000**  
MASCOTAS SON  
SACRIFICADAS  
CADA AÑO.

*Ayude a Prevenir la Sobrepoblación*

**[ Esterilice/Castre a sus Mascotas ]**

◀ **¿DESEA APRENDER MÁS SOBRE OPORTUNIDADES  
PARA ESTERILIZAR/CASTRAR A SUS MASCOTAS  
DISPONIBLES EN SU ÁREA?  
LEA EN EL REVERSO**



THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES

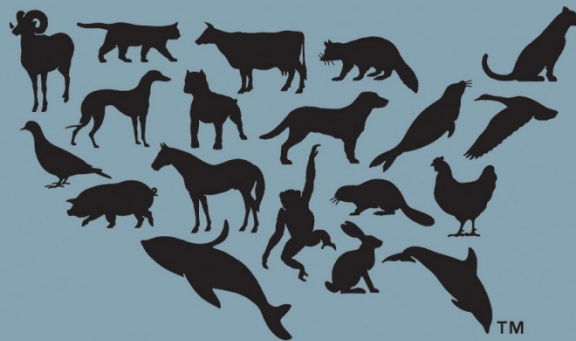
Questions? Comments?

Heather Cammisa

Spay/Neuter Initiatives Manager

(732) 746-3199

[hcammisa@humanesociety.org](mailto:hcammisa@humanesociety.org)



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY**  
OF THE UNITED STATES

Please visit

[www.humanesociety.org/spayneutercampaign](http://www.humanesociety.org/spayneutercampaign)

