

Humane Society launches low cost spay/neuter program



Contributed Mark Pankey, assistant shelter manager, and James Roscoe prepare to load Roscoe's dog, Snoopy, for transport to the new low cost spay/neuter clinic in Vass.

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Feb. 22 marked the first day public animals were sent to the new low cost spay/neuter clinic located in Vass. Despite the cold, driving rain, six pet owners arrived at the Humane Society of Richmond County animal shelter before 6:30 a.m. to drop off their pets for the trip to the clinic.

Spay/Neuter Veterinary Clinic of the Sandhills

In December 2007, the Spay/Neuter Veterinary Clinic of the Sandhills

began operations in Vass for the nine county region of Central North

Carolina. The population that the clinic services includes animal

welfare groups, animal control facilities, and individuals who cannot

afford a private veterinarian.

Surgeries are performed in the mornings and the animals are released after recovery in the afternoon. Normally, the service fee is \$45 for spay operations and canine neuters and \$35 for feline neuters; rabies vaccinations are \$7.

Richmond County program funding

Through the low cost spay/neuter program being operated by the Humane Society of Richmond County, vouchers are available for \$15. Richmond County's program is funded by a grant from the George D. Patterson Family Fund, said Candy Bacon, HSRC Director.

The George D. Patterson Family (also referred to as The Patterson Family Fund) provides support to agencies focused on animal welfare, primarily in the Piedmont region of the Carolinas.

Between 500 to 625 dogs and cats will be sterilized in 2008 using the grant funds and will receive a rabies vaccine if needed, Bacon said. These 500 plus surgeries will prevent the birth of an estimated 46,250 felines or 18,000 canines in one year.

A single female cat and her offspring can produce 74 cats at the end of one year. A single female dog and her offspring could conceivably produce 30 dogs at the end of one year.

Voucher costs and requirements

The grant funded program is available to all low-to-moderate income Richmond County residents. There are no income limitations or no public assistance requirements in order to participate in the program.

In other words, Bacon said, the program is open to anyone living in Richmond County needing their pet spayed or neutered. Vouchers must be purchased from the Humane Society prior to surgery. The \$15 vouchers cost covers \$5 for the spay/neuter voucher and \$10 to cover the cost of transportation to and from the clinic.

Rabies vaccines will be given at the clinic in Vass for an additional \$2 through the grant funded voucher program. A current rabies vaccine is required by North Carolina law for all cats and dogs four months of age or older.

Pet owners must present a valid rabies vaccine certificate for their pet at the time of purchasing a spay/neuter voucher or pay the \$2 fee to have their pet vaccinated at the clinic.

Surgical appointments

Once vouchers are purchased surgical appointments are scheduled by the staff of the Humane Society. Beginning March 1, Wednesday was designated as Richmond County's surgery day. Two Fridays a month have also been added to this schedule.

All pets being transported must arrive at the animal shelter no later than

6:30 a.m. the morning of surgery. Folks will need to sacrifice a little bit of sleep but their pets will receive a veterinary exam and quality surgery for \$15, said Bacon.

Due to the limited amount of space available on the Humane Society van, some pet owners of large dogs may need to transport their pet to the clinic. They would not pay the \$10 transportation fee but would have to have their pet at the clinic no later than 8 a.m. the day of surgery.

It's a very pleasant 45 minute trip up Highway #1 to the clinic, said Bacon. Animals are dropped off and picked up at the clinic with no overnight stay.

Voucher limitations

Voucher purchases are limited to three vouchers per household in six months. In other words, you could purchase three vouchers in March but would need to wait until September to purchase three more, said Bacon. This will give everyone a chance to participate.

Vouchers can be purchased at the Humane Society of Richmond County animal shelter located at 529 US Highway 74 West. The shelter is located two miles west of downtown Rockingham.

The shelter is open to the public Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday noon to 5:30 p.m., Saturday noon to 4 p.m. and Sunday 1 to 4 p.m. For additional information, please call 895-0335 after during listed business hours.

No one living in Richmond County should miss this opportunity to have their pet spayed or neutered for \$15, said Bacon.

The average cost of spaying a large female dog with office visit, required vaccines, deworming and surgery can run over \$200.