



Each year, there are more animals in need of homes than there are homes available to adopt them. While all breeds are at risk for overpopulation and homelessness, a high percentage of animals surrendered at community shelters are pit bull and pit bull mixes (pit bull/mixes). In 2015, 22% of dogs surrendered to the Sacramento SPCA were classified as pit bull or pit bull mixes. This classification can be a deterrent to adoption and many times, these dogs are in the shelter system longer than any other breed. Why is this? Pit bull/mixes have a reputation for being dangerous as they are a common breed used in dog fighting; some refer to them as “attack” dogs when they see them.⁶ Because of the reputation that follows pit bulls/mixes, it can be difficult to obtain affordable housing. Many property managers and apartment complexes will not rent to pit bull/mix owners; if they do, often times the pet deposit is higher and unaffordable. Even when the home is owned, the homeowner’s insurance premiums could be raised or the insurance cancelled outright due to a pit bull/mix living in the household. When a pit bull/mix is not spayed or neutered, there is a higher risk of surrender should the female dog become pregnant. According to the Dog Breeding Info Center, the average litter size of a pit bull/mix is 5-10 puppies.⁵ Within five years, one unaltered female dog and her offspring can produce 324 offspring.



One such case at the Sacramento SPCA is Daisy. Daisy was just one year old when she was found abandoned outside of the Adoptions building. She was lying on a khaki-colored comforter tending to ten newborn puppies—she wasn’t tied to anything when we she was discovered. She could have run away, but she didn’t; she stayed with her pups waiting to be found, caring for her newborns. Daisy and her puppies are now spayed or neutered and all have been adopted.

The best way to combat overpopulation and reduce the number of pit bull/mix surrenders is to spay or neuter the dog. In addition to reducing overpopulation, spaying and neutering has medical, behavioral, and cost benefits.

Medical benefits include:

- Female pets will live longer, healthier lives. Spaying helps prevent uterine infections and breast tumors which can be malignant or cancerous in 50% of dogs.²
- Neutering a male pet prevents testicular cancer and some prostate problems.²
- Neutered male dogs live 18% longer than unneutered dogs; spayed female dogs live 23% longer than unsprayed female dogs.³
- Evidence indicates that females spayed before their first heat are typically healthier.²

Behavioral benefits:

- Spayed females do not go into heat.²
- Male dogs are less likely to roam away from home.²
- Neutered males may be better behaved. Unneutered dogs are more likely to mark their territory by spraying strong-smelling urine; dogs are less likely to mount other dogs, people and inanimate objects, and some aggression problems may be avoided by early neutering.²
- Studies show that most dog bites involve dogs who are unaltered.³
- 97% of dogs involved in fatal dog attacks in 2006 were not spayed/neutered.¹

- More than 70% of dog bites in 2006 were from unneutered male dogs. ¹
- An unneutered male dog is 2.6 times more likely to bite than a neutered dog. ¹
- Male dogs are 6.2 times more likely to bite than female dogs ¹

Cost benefits:

- The cost of the surgery is significantly less than caring for a litter of puppies. ³
- Caring for a pet with reproductive system cancer or pyometra (an infection in the uterus) can cost thousands of dollars. ²
- Unaltered pets can be more destructive and high strung around other dogs which can lead to serious fights causing significant injuries. ³
- Renewing pet licenses can be more expensive in some communities for unaltered pets. ³

Community benefits:

- Communities spend millions of dollars to control unwanted animals. ⁴
- Spay/neuter decreases the homeless animal population. Shelters are full of homeless animals, and there are not enough homes for all of them. ⁴
- Spay/neuter decreases the number of strays, which are often involved in dog bites and attacks, automobile accidents, defecation on and damage to private property, and more. ⁴
- Stray animals can also scare away and kill wildlife and other domestic animals. ⁴



To learn more about how you can sponsor one of the available We Pay to Spay clinics, contact Michele Steiner, development officer, at 916-504-2870 or msteiner@sspca.org.

1. 1800PetMeds. Pit Bull Myths and Facts. <http://www.1800petmeds.com/education/pit-bull-facts-and-myths.htm>

2. ASPCA. Spay/Neuter Your Pet. <http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/spayneuter-your-pet>

3. The Humane Society of the United States. Why You Should Spay/Neuter Your Pet. http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/pet_overpopulation/facts/why_spay_neuter.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/

4. Sacramento SPCA. Why Spay or Neuter Your Pet? <http://www.sspca.org/general-information/why-spay-or-neuter-your-pet>

5. Dog Breed Info Center. American Pit Bull Terrier. <http://www.dogbreedinfo.com/americanpitbull.htm>

6. HSUS. Off Duty: Public Pit Bull Defender. <http://www.humanesociety.org/news/profile/off-duty/2012/off-duty-public-pit-bull-defender.html>