

here & there

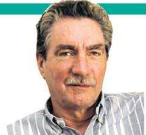
■ BEST PRACTICE

Free pets have hidden costs

Before adopting a cat or dog, it's important to learn how to be a responsible pet owner

Doug Shackell

Animal
Talk



So, you found your new pet on Kijiji or from a friend. Let's be really clear – there is no such thing as a free pet. That's because when you get your new dog or cat home there will be many costs.

First and foremost will be the costs for vaccination and spay/neuter surgery. (Females are spayed; neuter is the term commonly used for castration of a male dog or cat.) Spaying or neutering your new pet is the first step towards being a responsible pet owner. You can do your part in controlling the pet population on P.E.I. by making sure your pet doesn't contribute to the problem.

Currently, there are over 100 cats and kittens under the care of the P.E.I. Humane Society, either at the shelter or in foster care until they are old enough to be adopted. If you are looking for a cat or kitten, this should be your first stop. A female kitten costs \$195 from the Humane Society. Your 'free' cat will cost you roughly \$300 plus taxes for vaccinations and spay/neuter surgery. And costs are higher for dogs. Besides giving your new pet a good home, you can be confident that an animal from the Humane Society has already been examined by a veterinarian, had all its vaccinations and been spayed or neutered. This assures that you are getting your pet off to a healthy start in its new home.

SpayAid P.E.I. fast facts

- The 100 per cent volunteer charitable organization, works together with a network of veterinarians on P.E.I. who donate part of the cost of the regular spay/neuter prices to help those who cannot otherwise afford to spay or neuter their dog, cat or rabbit. For more information or to apply, go to www.spayaidpei.com.

- The non-profit organization fundraises to make this program possible. It solicits public financial support and issues tax deductible charitable receipts for donors.

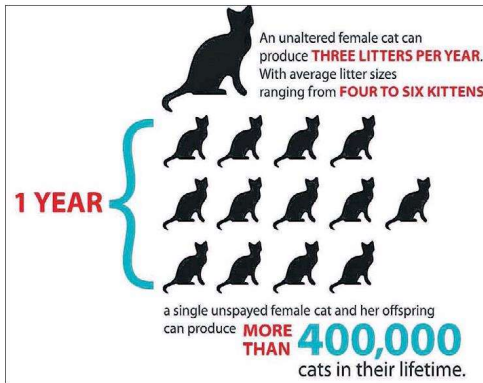
- For more information, go to www.spayaidpei.com.

A vaccinated and spayed or neutered pet offers many advantages. First, there are long term health benefits for both males and females. In male dogs, castration lessens their need to wander and, in male cats, it will signifi-



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A puppy is ready to play after a neuter. A plastic cone is commonly recommended after surgery to prevent the pet from licking at the incision site.



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This shows how quickly one cat family can grow.

cantly reduce the need to spray to mark their territory. For females, you won't have to deal with unexpected pregnancies and litters of puppies and kittens for whom you have to find homes. Both males and females will be calmer as they will not feel the biological urge and associated behaviours to find a mate and procreate. In all cases you will help foster an environment where you and your pet live a happy and long life together.

It is never too late to have your pet vaccinated and neutered. If cost is a barrier, you may apply to SpayAid P.E.I. for assistance. This organization was created 11 years ago by dedicated volunteers

to provide financial assistance to the Island's low-income families to help offset the costs of vaccinations and spay/neuter surgeries, in partnership with participating vet clinics. SpayAid P.E.I. has helped over 3,300 pets and their families to date.

Coming next: Introducing dogs.

Doug Shackell is a board member of SpayAid P.E.I. and the P.E.I. Humane Society, two of the member groups of the P.E.I. Companion Animal Welfare Initiative (CAWI), the goal of which is to improve the welfare of owned and unowned companion animals on P.E.I.

Animal Talk appears bi-monthly in The Guardian. CAWI also includes the P.E.I. Cat Action Team, P.E.I. Veterinary Medical Association, P.E.I. Department of Agriculture

Happy adoption



KRISTA MACMULLIN/THE GUARDIAN

Meghan MacMullin holds Oscar, a 10-month-old Dachshund/Shih Tzu mix, adopted this past August. Says owner Krista MacMullin, "This is our first Christmas. He is just such a good boy and we love him so much."

and Forestry and the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre at AVC. For more information, see gov.pe.ca/agriculture/CAWI.

Readers may send questions related to the well-being of owned and unowned companion animals to askcawi@gmail.com.