

Better Pet Control Hinges On Their Owners

EDITOR'S NOTE: Our animal population is soaring four times as fast as the human population, and excess animals are "put to sleep" by the thousands. This, the last of four articles, suggests what good citizens can do about it. The writer is a homemaker, graduate student at Wayne State University, and Journalism Intern for Observer Newspapers.

By JOAN WEAVER
Special Writer

If something like 45 per cent of the 122,000 families in Observerland have pets —

If more than half are dogs and the rest mostly cats —

If, as authorities say, 90 per cent of all dog owners dutifully get annual licenses for their pets —

Then why do 18,000 animals end up each year in area animal shelters? And why are more than 12,000 of those "put to sleep?"

Many veterinarians and animal control officers blame Detroit. They say thousands of animals are simply dumped out in the suburbs by Detroiters and others wander across boundaries from Detroit.

An estimated 100,000 strays roam the streets of Detroit, and as with other big city problems, the suburbs receive the overflow.

Farmington veterinarian John Richardson says:

"The thousands of dogs in the inner city don't belong to anybody. They go home for a meal, then roam the streets, defecating on sidewalks, tipping over garbage cans and

Cycling To Get State Attention In Panel Talks

LANSING

Joseph Seavey, Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Recreation Services Division chief, will moderate a panel discussion entitled "Bikeways, Their Planning, Design and Operation," at a Jan. 8 bicycling symposium at the Olds Plaza Hotel in Lansing.

Those attending the symposium will listen to and participate in a number of bicycling-related discussions featuring up-to-date information on various aspects of bicycling, all intended to stimulate a positive interchange of ideas and promote cooperation and coordination among cycling enthusiasts and public and private recreation agencies.

Attending will be representatives from Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan; including government officials of varying responsibilities and members of bicycling organizations.

hitting children — and often they end up on our streets."

They also end up in our shelters, our crematoriums; they get hit by our cars, starve and freeze to death.

Veterinarians, animal control officers and perhaps you have all seen cars pull up to a curb, toss out an animal, young or adult, and then

speed away. There is little recourse, even if you jot down the license number and notify the proper authorities. It's almost impossible to prove, and usually the case gets thrown out of court.

Some of the possible solutions to the multiple problems of animal population control, according to the ar-

ticle in Modern Veterinary Practice, by Don Mahan, include:

•The development of non-surgical contraceptives for animals.

•Higher license fees for intact animals (which Detroit has just started).

•More stringent leash laws.

Public education on pet ownership responsibilities.

•Humane euthanasia of surplus animals.

Dr. Richardson, who feels

spay clinics are a financial burden on the non-petowning taxpayer, would like to see existing leash laws more conscientiously enforced.

He feels that the greatest hope for solving some of the problems lies in educating the public on the true situation and on the responsibilities of owning a pet.

Pets must be inoculated, should be spayed or neutered, and need medical care periodically. All that costs money. "There is no need to

limit pet ownership to the very wealthy," Dr. Richardson says, "but people should be able to afford a pet."

If you are having trouble meeting the bills and putting groceries on the table, it might be a good rule of thumb to wait until you are more financially secure to get that little puppy or kitten

that you saw in the pet shop the other day.

They are not toys to be thrown away when people tire of them. Rather, they are living creatures whose behavior, welfare, reproductive habits and good health become the responsibility of the people who take them inside their homes.

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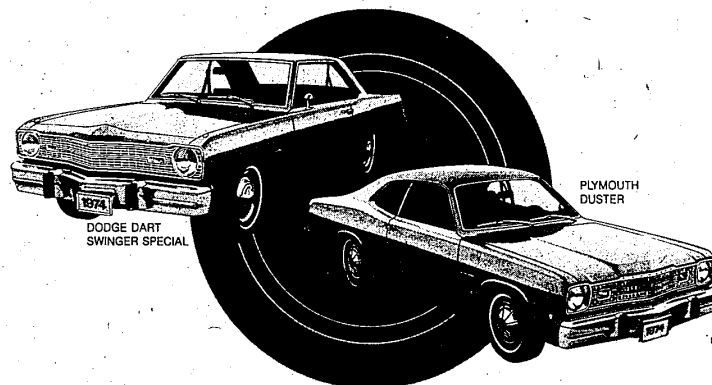
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