



AMERICAN  
KENNEL CLUB<sup>SM</sup>

## MANDATORY SPAY/NEUTER LAWS

### BACKGROUND:

Mandatory spay/neuter laws are usually considered by state and local governments in response to animal control concerns in the community. Proponents believe that mandatory spay/neuter laws will reduce the number of animals at the local shelters and strays roaming in neighborhoods. However, these laws have not proven an effective solution to animal control concerns and punish responsible breeders.

### POINTS TO CONSIDER:

- **MANDATORY SPAY/NEUTER LAWS ARE INEFFECTIVE**  
Mandatory spay/neuter laws have not proven effective in reducing shelter populations. In fact, some shelters have seen an increase as owners choose to leave their dogs at a shelter if they are unable to pay the costs associated with having their dog spayed or neutered. Moreover, many national research organizations have reported that the majority of unwanted dogs in the United States come from irresponsible owners who are unwilling to train, socialize, or care for their dogs. Imposing a mandatory spay/neuter law will not resolve the issue of irresponsible ownership.
- **MANDATORY SPAY/NEUTER LAWS ARE DIFFICULT TO ENFORCE**  
Mandatory spay/neuter laws are extremely difficult to enforce and can be evaded by irresponsible animal owners. Mandatory spay/neuter laws often result in a decrease in the number of dogs licensed, because some individuals choose to not license their animals in order to avoid spaying and neutering their pets.
- **MANDATORY SPAY/NEUTER LAWS ARE COSTLY TO THE COMMUNITY**  
Mandatory spay/neuter laws greatly increase the work load of animal control offices, many of which are already strained financially. Animal control offices also find they are euthanizing more animals at the taxpayer's expense, because some owners choose to leave their animals at the shelter rather than complying with the law. A mandatory spay/neuter law also communicates the message that the municipality is not "dog friendly" and sends a strong message that AKC events, which generate a significant amount of revenue for the local economy, are not welcome in the community.
- **MANDATORY SPAY/NEUTER LAWS ARE UNFAIR TO RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNERS**  
Mandatory spay/neuter laws target all dog owners, regardless of their level of responsibility or the behavior of their animals. The AKC believes responsible owners have a right to use their own discretion in determining whether to alter their animals. In addition, these laws would restrict the rights of numerous responsible breeders who breed and raise purebred dogs for the purpose of showing. These breeders make a serious commitment to their animals and to ensuring the future health, welfare and breed type of their individual breeds. The AKC believes the decision to spay/neuter is best left to responsible owners in consultation with their veterinarian.

### A BETTER SOLUTION IS AVAILABLE

Rather than impose a mandatory spay/neuter law on all dog owners, governments should instead focus on enforcing effective animal control laws and increasing public education efforts. Strongly enforced regulations such as leash laws would prevent irresponsible owners from allowing their pets to run loose, which can lead to accidental breeding. A strong public education campaign teaches community residents how to properly care for their pets and the importance of being a responsible pet owner. The American Kennel Club, as well as many local dog clubs, can assist communities in developing effective animal control laws and public education programs that address the issue of irresponsible ownership while still protecting the rights of responsible owners and breeders.