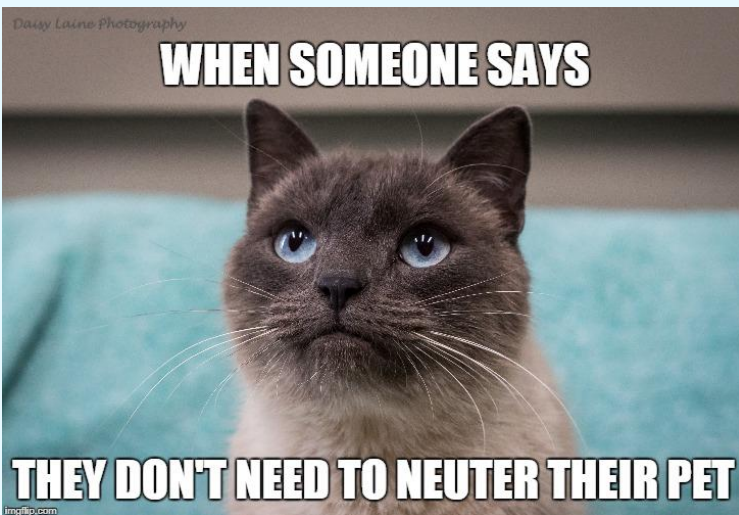


# Overpopulation: It's Raining Cats and Dogs!

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Here at the Saskatoon SPCA, we are the front line for all lost, abandoned, and otherwise homeless animals within city limits. When an animal is found "running at large" (stray), it's up to [Saskatoon Animal Control Agency](#) to pick them up and bring them to our Lost & Found. We provide shelter to an average of 4 000 animals each year; in 2017, *56.8% of these animals came in as strays*.

It is a sad fact that society tends to put more value on dogs than on cats – not only in ensuring that they are brought to the Lost & Found in the first place, but also when it comes to owners making the effort to redeem their missing pets before we must find them a new home. Cat overpopulation has become a huge concern for animal shelters, not only in the City of Saskatoon, but across the country.



## What's the Big Deal?

The reality of cat overpopulation is that it affects everyone. Stray cats can be seen as a nuisance to many, preying on wildlife and damaging property.

Many stray cats are unvaccinated, which means they can contract and carry potentially deadly diseases such as panleukopenia or rabies. When these strays come in to the shelter, we are faced with the burden of rehoming them; a feat that can force shelters to euthanize perfectly healthy, friendly animals.

## What Difference Can One Unaltered Animal Make?

Suppose we have one unsprayed female cat wandering the City of Saskatoon. This one cat is capable of producing up to three litters a year, with the average litter consisting of 4.5 kittens. If each of her offspring reproduced at the same (alarming) rate, the impact on the population would be immense:

- After 1 year: 14 additional stray cats
  - 2 years: 203 cats
  - 3 years: 2 754 cats
  - 4 years: 37 193 cats
  - 5 years: 502 119 cats
  - 6 years: 6 778 620 cats
  - After 7 years:  
*91,511,383 cats*

## Spaying and Neutering: The Ultimate Solution!

We are flooded with unplanned litters of kittens every spring. There are simply not enough good homes to provide care for the magnitude of cats and kittens in our community. Irresponsible pet owners who fail to provide the essential spay or neuter surgery to their pet are directly contributing to the impossible volume of animals in shelters; the solution is simply a matter of “family planning” to prevent unplanned and unwanted litters of baby animals.

*Spaying* (the removal of a female animal’s uterus and ovaries) and *neutering* (the removal of a male animal’s testicles) are routine procedures performed by a veterinarian that will render the animal incapable of reproduction. This is widely recognized as one of the easiest way to ensure a happier, healthier, and longer-living pet, as well as help control the pet population in your community.

- ❖ Spay and neuter procedures greatly reduce the risk of your pet contracting uterine infections, cancers of the reproductive system, and other diseases that relate to reproductive organs.
- ❖ Unaltered males tend to “roam” (that’s right – in search of a mate), which can expose them to getting in fights with other animals, encountering traffic, and risking injuries.
- ❖ The resulting litters and potential illnesses of an unaltered pet can leave a pet owner with hefty, unexpected veterinary bills. Even if these litters are brought into a shelter, they take a toll on their very limited resources, resulting in less space for other animals in need.
- ❖ Other undesirable behaviours of unaltered animals include dominant aggression, “marking” (urinating), continuous vocalization, and mounting of animals, people, and objects.

Veterinarians are now realizing that the spay or neuter procedure can be performed in cats as young as eight weeks of age. In fact, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, the American Veterinary Medical Association, the American Animal Hospital Association, the Association of Feline Practitioners, *and* the Association of Shelter Veterinarians have all endorsed the [Fix by Five](#) initiative in an attempt to get more cats spayed or neutered before the age of five months.

## Responsible Pet Ownership

If you are thinking of bringing a pet into your home, consider adopting from your local SPCA or Humane Society. Not only are you helping an animal in need find their forever home, but this is often the more convenient and cost-effective option.

***Did You Know?*** *When you adopt from the Saskatoon SPCA, your pet will have already had the procedure, and the cost will be included in your adoption fee!*

If you have an unaltered animal at home, be a responsible pet parent – *spay or neuter your pets*. If you are concerned about the cost of doing so, the City of Saskatoon’s [Subsidized Spay Neuter Program \(SSNP\)](#) provides assistance to low-income pet owners. With your help, we can work together to reduce pet homelessness and end cat overpopulation.

