

## PETS

# Low-cost spay/neuter clinic caters to cat, pit bull owners

SPCA hopes move will lead to fewer strays

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The Maryland Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has stepped up its efforts to keep the pet population under control with a brand-new spay/neuter clinic targeted specifically toward cats and pit bulls in low-income households.

"Pit bulls and cats are the most frequently abandoned animals," said Aileen Gabbey, executive director at the SPCA. "Spaying and neutering will lead to safer communities, fewer strays and less aggressive animals."

The clinic is an expansion of the SPCA's existing spay/neuter program, which altered more than 6,000 pets in 2007. The two new programs are called Pit-Fix, for pit bulls, and Fix-Able, both for owners who are low-income.

The American Humane Association, PetSmart Charities, the

## How to help

If you are interested in volunteering with the Maryland SPCA, please visit [mdsPCA.org](http://mdsPCA.org) or call 410-235-8826, ext. 135.

Herbert Bearman Foundation and the La Verna Hahn Foundation are all sponsors of the clinic, but the SPCA is still accepting donations and volunteers.

"Around 5 million animals are euthanized each year due to a lack of home," said Lilliam Alfaro, a veterinarian who works closely with the SPCA. "We want to decrease and potentially eradicate pet overpopulation, but spaying/neutering was cost-prohibitive for many people."

Not only does spaying/neutering eliminate the possibility of cancers related to the reproductive organs in pets, it also has been shown to reduce aggression in animals. With pit bulls, the surgery can potentially curb the level of dog-dog or dog-animal aggression.

Depending on the health condition of the dog or cat, regular spaying/neutering costs range from \$200 to \$1,000. The SPCA's clinic

has reduced the price range to \$30 to \$50, and has incorporated new surgical techniques that make surgery faster and more efficient.

We are fortunate to have the support of local veterinarians. We found that they are happy to pass the name of the program along to clients," said Estelle Ward, a Eastern Animal Hospital veterinarian and SPCA Board of Directors member.

During a special workshop, the SPCA hosted the Humane Alliance, a high-volume clinic from Asheville, N.C. "Their veterinarian has instituted new technologies that makes surgery more efficient," Gabbey said.

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Sibille Cook, of Baltimore, holds Cleo, her 6-month-old rescued pit bull, at the Maryland SPCA in Baltimore. - Chris Ammann/Examiner