

Dealing with the unwanted animals

Submitted By
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On the outside door to my office I have hung a sign that says "open with care – do not let cats and kittens out."

My office has become a refuge for felines in need. They are everywhere – 13 of them – some running free and some in cages. Most have been here for months. Kittens that fit in the palm of my hand when they arrived are now half grown. Many kittens that are taken in go from babyhood to adulthood in my office.

Volunteers take good care of these cats. The ones that are old enough have all been spayed or neutered. Vaccinations and deworming takes place the day after they arrive. They are a fairly content lot as they get lots of petting, cuddling and brushing. They all get their turn at running free during the day.

A few lucky older ones get to spend their nights in the barn with the horses, where they entertain themselves catching mice. They all become quite used to

dogs and it's not uncommon to see them curled up having a snooze with my old sled dog, Delta.

These beautiful, well behaved and happy cats are someone's discards – the unwanted. And it's getting discouraging trying to find them a good home. Even offering them at half price doesn't do the trick. Why? There are simply too many cats in our town.

Several months ago I received a phone call. A family had a dozen cats and kittens in their home with more on the way. Would the SPCA take them? No, I said, there's no room and our policy is not to accept pets from private homes – it's the owner's responsibility to find homes for the kittens and puppies they've brought into this world. But, then I gave in and said I had room for just two of the kittens. I grabbed my smallest crate (on purpose so I wouldn't have room for more than two) and headed off to pick up the kittens.

I arrived to find cats everywhere in the porch and kitchen. All were shiny and healthy. They were obviously

being fed and cared for. The young girl who owned them was greatly distressed because all her cats were to be destroyed at 2 p.m. that day.

This was a situation where a female cat had been brought into the house and not spayed. She had babies, which they were unable to find homes for. Then she had more babies. Then the babies started having babies. It was a nightmare.

The girl's brother shoved three of the smallest kittens into my crate. I didn't argue about the extra one. Then, as I was leaving I had to walk past a window. There sitting on the window sill was a dainty little black and white kitten with a blue collar. I picked her up and there was just enough room to fit her into the now very full crate.

Gunny Sacks

That afternoon, as arranged, a man came to get the rest of the cats and kittens. He took them out into the bush and put them into gunny sacks. Then he took out his rifle and shot at the sacks until there was no more movement.

Would it not be better to have spayed the first cat?

The SPCA runs a spay/neuter subsidy program. We do our best to educate people, especially about the importance of spaying and neutering. We now have a website that offers pet owners information on the proper care of their pets. We publish a newsletter with our adoptees' pictures in it, as well as stories and educational material. Volunteer members do their best to assist people with their pet problems. At the same time we care for as many dogs and cats as we can fit in until we can find them a home.

All of this takes up our time, but we also incur expenses. Today, June 23 you will see volunteers on the streets of Flin Flon holding their annual tag day. With your support we can continue what we are doing. Please help us help those who can't help themselves.

And that female cat you have in your house right now, please, please get her spayed tomorrow. My office full of cats is proof that there aren't enough good homes out there!