

Neutering for pets is urged

By Andrea Damewood

The Register-Guard

Published: Wednesday, January 17, 2007

A rash of unwanted puppies at the Lane County Animal Regulation Authority is severely stretching the agency's resources and leaving its director frustrated.

The county has offered \$25 spay and neuter vouchers to low-income residents since 2004, LCARA Director Mike Wellington said, yet response has been tepid.

"We have them, but people are not utilizing them as much as we'd like them to," he said. "We've had two or three litters of puppies all at one time, and it stretched us here. We wanted to get the word out that there's these vouchers."

The system is simple, Wellington said. Five percent of dog license fees from residents in unincorporated areas of the county go toward the vouchers, creating a self-sustaining program. Right now, the county has about 180 vouchers, but as more license fees are collected, more become available, he said.

Any county resident who meets income guidelines can apply for the vouchers. Eligible applicants can receive up to four \$25 vouchers a year, to be applied to operations at 17 area veterinary offices.

"I'm surprised we haven't had more of a response," Wellington said. "It's been a good success; we just need more people to know about it."

Those who want to help the program can do so by purchasing dog licenses - which not only help ensure that a lost pup is returned home but also support the vouchers and help pay for animal cruelty investigations, he said.

The Eugene Kennel Club also offers case-by-case sterilization subsidies for select low-income families. They can be requested by calling spokeswoman Sylvia Calderwood at 342-1958.

The city of Eugene has a low-cost clinic that shares the LCARA building. Springfield-area residents were given reduced-rate options when the Mohawk Veterinary Hospital, 1814 Q St., began offering surgeries in October. The clinic charges \$35 to \$50 for the cat procedures, and \$50 to \$100 for operations on dogs.

LOW-COST SPAY AND NEUTER VOUCHERS

How to apply for subsidies from LCARA

At the offices: 3970 W. First Ave., Eugene

Online: www.lanecounty.org/Animals/VoucherProgram.htm