

Meeting Minutes – McLean (Northern Virginia) - Pet Overpopulation Study Group – Saturday, October 16, 2004

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Here are the minutes from the McLean/Northern Virginia meeting of 10/16/04.

This was the last meeting of four meetings in the “October round”, the earlier meetings having been held in Charlottesville (10/3/04), Richmond (10/9/04), and Roanoke (10/10/04).

This was another good meeting.

There is much to do, and we will be specific in the next few days. Our intention is to summarize the conclusions from all of the meetings and to establish an outline of next steps.

Lillian Clancy and Don Marro

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A meeting regarding the pet overpopulation study started at 11:10 am at the McLean Community Center on Saturday, 10/16/04.

attendees:

Rita Altman/independent  
Sara Amundson/Doris Day Animal League  
Valerie Bannister/Piedmont Feline Rescue League  
Karen Bryson/Oldies but Goodies Cocker Rescue  
Lynn Dykstra/Focused Images  
Michelle Hankins/No More Homeless Pets DC  
Vicki Katrinak/HSUS  
Melissa Klein/Humane Society of Fairfax County  
Susanne Kogut/Hot Water Rescue  
Paula Kyle/Humane Society of Fairfax County  
Rosalie Lesser  
Gwynne Mason/Humane Society of Fairfax County  
Ann Plamondon/independent  
Lisa Qualls/Action for Animals Network  
Patti Stinson/AForeverHome  
Sue Weis/Blue Ridge Border Collie Rescue  
Lana Westfall  
Allegra Wood/Humane Society of Fairfax County  
Rob Wood/independent

unable to attend:

Suzanne Ashby/Humane Investigator, Fauquier County

Barbara Becker/Feline Network

Tammy Burton/HART

Carmen Cline/AForeverHome

Kit Creasy

Sandra Echeverry/HART

Julie Falconer/Voices for Animals

Laura Koschny/Action for Animals Network

Alison Kruk/No More Homeless Pets DC

Michelle McCall/No More Homeless Pets DC

Nancy Randall

Mary Rogers

Josseline Wood/independent

Introductions

Attendees introduced themselves and spoke briefly of the group with which they are affiliated or otherwise described their reasons for attending.

## Agenda

1. Melissa Klein discussed the role she and Ann Plamondon had in getting the animal friendly license plates program established. She expressed her concern that money is being collected and disbursed, but there is no one watching what happens with the funds – that there is no accountability for organizations receiving funds. She would like the funds to be tracked, she would like to show as good examples those doing good education/outreach. She said that there had been plans for PaLC/Prevent a Litter Coalition when she was President/Exec. Director to list details of the various animal friendly license plate programs, nationwide, to do study/research regarding the efficacy of these license plate programs, and to track how the funds were spent and the results of these expenditures in terms of s/n numbers achieved. She suggested that the status of this “best practices” info could be determined by contacting PaLC.

She mentioned having talked several years ago with Spay USA’s Esther Mechler, suggesting that there might be a Spay Virginia, a Spay Minnesota, and so forth, where there would be a central repository of the reduced-cost s/n resources with details as to who could qualify for services, by state and location within the state. PaLC had done such a regional guide and then did a Virginia version. This information was available in print and on the PaLC web site at one point. She suggested that PaLC be contacted to see if this info was still available and updated.

Having also worked on the s/n stamps, she discussed the marketing/merchandising arm of the post office and what might be happening with funds generated by aftermarket sales of goods related to the original s/n stamps based on what the plans were when the new PaLC leadership to handle the marketing phase of the stamp took charge.

2. Ann Plamondon said that groups doing s/n surgery can apply for funds from animal friendly license plate sales. A signature on the DMV disbursement form from a representative of the receiving jurisdiction certifies that the funds will be used for s/n and not for any other expense, such as the phone bill.

She continued that an issue is that wealthy areas sell more plates and get more funding, but poorer counties get little. She suggested that the method of distribution be re-written, and suggested further that other states have distribution systems which Virginia might copy. There are now 26 states with revenue-generating animal-friendly license plates. She stated that there was no “best practices” yet available on the license plate programs.

3. Susanne Kogut spoke of her visit to Humane Alliance in NC.
4. Sue Weis spoke of the description of Spay Virginia at a recent meeting at Ayrshire.
5. Melissa Klein indicated there are currently 2 mobile s/n clinics in northern Virginia.

6. Sara Amundson suggested that a comprehensive list be developed which would identify all high volume and other s/n programs in the entire Commonwealth, leading to not only knowing what is being done, but also seeing the holes and what hasn't been addressed. Information collected would include how many surgeries can be done in a given time and the impact of overnight stays. Sara characterized it as basic simplistic information that is needed to set priorities for addressing compliance issues.

Sue Weis thought some such information might be available from MetroPets, but didn't think it was statewide information.

Melissa Klein mentioned that the PETS911 national databank web site was such a central repository for s/n, with info available by location/zip code.

Sue Weis suggested that information gathered include any means test information which is being used for s/n surgery charges, and what is being done for the cats and dogs owned by the public in general (as opposed to rescue or shelter animals).

7. Don Marro pointed out that the "conclusions" section of the documents sent out were no more than suggestions from various people and not a final list of things to do as some had mistakenly thought.
8. Don Marro said there would be outreach to various groups to see if common ground could be reached on one or more issues. Groups include veterinarians, VACA, the office of the State Veterinarian, Spay Virginia, VFHS, breeders, and AKC.
9. Sue Weis and Rita Altman both discussed the advantages gained when shelters and clinics can work together. Sue suggested that s/n surgery initially be done on shelter animals, then on rescue animals, and then generally for the public.
10. Rita Altman suggested that the advantages of early s/n surgery be promoted more.
11. Melissa Klein discussed the potential benefits of legislation that enables the counties to use dog license fees to s/n, not directing license revenues to the general fund.
12. Sara Amundson recommended pushing compliance for existing dog license purchase requirements, creating an incentive to raise the level of actual compliance. She believes that license differentials are only the first step to creating incentives to spay or neuter dogs (and cats) and that licensing programs have suffered due to non-compliance.
13. Ann Plamondon indicated that compliance regarding licenses will be more easily achieved by getting local officials to see that they are walking away from money.

She further noted that by making a substantial donation to elected officials ensures that her voice has influence. Ann counseled that donations to officials can be useful tools for gaining support for programs.

14. Susanne Kogut suggested the group get to the point where issues are narrowed and prioritized, with an assessment of political benefits and opposing arguments against each action.
15. Lisa Qualls asked about the name of the organization, and wondered if it will be a group with a focus only on dogs and cats.

It appeared in brief follow-up discussion that the initial focus would be cats and dogs, but it is not clear yet where things might go later.

The proposed name of our organization, Virginia Voters for Animal Welfare, appeared to be favorable.

Having heard no opposition, we record this group to be in favor of this name.

16. Sara Amundson suggested forming a PAC for animals in Virginia that could be used for state and local candidates.
17. Allegra Wood asked when the group would get focused.

In the same vein, Lynn Dykstra asked what shape and form the organization would have.

Don Marro likened the group now to an all-volunteer army, with each person being an army of one but with the goals and organizational structure yet to be described once consensus building is done.

18. Patti Stinson asked if overcharging on the s/n neuter stamp, as has been done with the breast cancer stamp, might be a way to raise s/n funds.

Melissa Klein said that when the PaLC Stamp Out Campaign to obtain the s/n stamps was being developed, it was determined that going for a revenue producing stamp, like the Breast Cancer Stamp was not a practical goal. There has been no other such stamp since the Breast Cancer Stamp.

19. A discussion took place regarding the presentation to be done by Dr. Michael McDonald dealing with lowered cost/high volume s/n at a profit. The goal is to provide a variety of options regarding s/n, McDonald's "for profit" model included. Virginia Voters for Animal Welfare is expecting to host a presentation by Dr. McDonald on 12/1/04.

Sara Amundson suggested harnessing the energy from the work done to date to focus on a single short-term successful endeavor, and requested we work diligently to attract veterinarians to the McDonald presentation on 12/1.

Lynn Dykstra asked the goal of having the McDonald presentation.

Don Marro answered by saying he hoped to show that low cost s/n can be profitable or as a practice expansion tool, or for overhead absorption, and might also be a matter of continuing technical education for the vets. Now the word needs to be gotten out, a press release and info sheet needs to be put together, and a mail campaign needs to start.

Melissa Klein suggested that an endorsement for the McDonald presentation from the DC Academy (veterinary continuing education), perhaps having the endorsement take the form of providing their site for the program, would be valuable. That having a vet recommend this to the Academy would be the best way to go, rather than having outsiders do so. That same strategy would also work for the Northern Virginia Veterinary Medical Association and the Virginia Veterinary Medical Association annual conference and published veterinary medical journal.

Vicki Katrinak suggested that getting those still in veterinary medical school to attend would be an advantage.

It was discussed that there is no local veterinary medical school in northern Virginia, but there are vet tech programs/training in Loudoun County and at Northern Virginia Community College. There is only the Washington DC Academy for vets in northern Virginia.

Lynn Dykstra wondered if it might be advantageous to have the scheduled McDonald program on 12/1/04, but also schedule a second event with him.

Melissa Klein felt that doing a good video of the event would be expensive.

Allegra Wood and Gwynne Mason said armed with information about McDonald and a commitment to contact 4-5 vets in person about the program would be the plan they would favor.

Sue Weis wants to ensure that vets associated with shelters and “on call” vets are especially targeted for inclusion.

Allegra Wood asked that each person contacting vets send in the names so that we have a central repository of who was approached.

Lynn Dykstra suggested positioning it as an opportunity for vets to learn. There was a roundtable discussion that this approach might alienate/insult some vets.

Sue Weis said that might threaten some vets, but perhaps it could be promoted as a way to make money.

Melissa Klein said often vets feel they do the rescue/shelter community a favor by giving discounts and suggested that this “learning op” would not be seen as a benefit. The economic incentive or a recommendation from a fellow vet might work best.

Susanne Kogut said to ask the vet’s viewpoint, saying their input is valued.

Don Marro suggested that he thought there could be no “one approach fits all” vets approach.

Ann Plamondon suggested a good model is the Virginia Beach program under Sharon Adams in terms of how various animals are organized and scheduled for a volume s/n clinic.

Melissa Klein suggested that McDonald be encouraged to do a presentation at the VVMA and AVMA to get institutional backing.

20. A discussion of the classified dogs for sale project followed.

Don Marro brought up the desire to identify every dog so their source will be known for accountability.

Don Marro described the economic implications shown by this volume of advertising.

Lynn Dykstra wondered if dog breeders need a license. Melissa Klein and others said the answer to this is no.

Michelle Hankins wondered if this information wouldn’t be of interest to the IRS and Department of Revenue, asking them if such revenue (sales tax and business licenses) is being collected.

Susanne Kogut indicated that this revenue information may be useful in reaching politicians to support legislation, but recommended also trying to reach organizations typically in opposition of such legislation to build support among reputable breeders.

Don Marro asked that she provide any information/names of those who would be considered reputable.

21. Lynn Dykstra said that dogs must be licensed to use Fairfax dog parks.

22. Melissa Klein indicated it is a county by county decision to allow vets to sell dog licenses. She said licenses can be purchased from the Fairfax County animal shelter/pound, an animal control officer, or the county taxation offices on Government Center

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Parkway. However, she is not in favor of devoting effort to licensing if the funds don't go to the animals.

The meeting was adjourned at 1 pm.