

Georgia Companion Animal Coalition



PROBLEM:

Georgia has thousands more cats and dogs than we have homes for. Our animal shelters are overrun, and our animal welfare infrastructure is overwhelmed, due to the financial crisis, the Pandemic and too few Georgians spaying and neutering their dogs and cats. This has resulted in:

1) Tremendous Financial Cost to the state of Georgia, a conservative > \$136 million annually:

Animal Welfare Non-Profits: \$76m (funded by GA's taxpayers, as private citizens, pick up 56%, > of the annual cost)
Municipal Animal Shelters: \$60m (this doesn't include the cost to run GA Dept. of Ag.'s Companion Animal Division)

2) Increased risks to Public Safety and Taxpayer Waste across the state:

- **Increased dog bites/maulings** resulting in injury, lost limbs, or death. Approx. 81% of all dog attacks involve children, with children between the ages of five and nine at the greatest risk of serious injuries. Georgia has recently had several fatalities from dog bites.
- Increased numbers of cruelty and animal hoarding cases,
- **Increased spread of contagious diseases due to increases in unvaccinated pets** – Rabies, Parvo, and Heartworm
- **Animal Control agencies are so busy corralling homeless pets; they barely have time to fulfill their most important roles, which are to educate Georgians on calls, or ins schools, do community outreach, to enforce local ordinances and state laws**, to investigate dogfighting, illegal breeding, cruelty, neglect, and hoarding cases, and to report other crimes. As First Responders they often have first knowledge of situations involving domestic, child & elder abuse.
- **These increases in cases of hoarding, neglect, cruelty, and dog bites use up precious public resources: local law enforcement: police, sheriffs, code enforcement, and Prosecutors, Judges, Defense Attorneys, and the entire court system.**
- Each of Georgia's >500 homeless pet shelter & rescue entities (that exist purely because GA has too many homeless pets) require licensing & inspections by GA's Dept. of Agriculture's Companion Animal Division, which does not have the budget to staff enough inspectors to cover all those rescues and shelters.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Pilot program with a sunset clause based on effectiveness, consisting of 4 components that target the causes of our homeless pet overpopulation:

- 1) **Public Service Messaging Campaign Statewide** – spreading the awareness of the dire need to spay/neuter.
- 2) **Statewide Fee Pet Education portal** – dog bite safety, basic care & training for new pets, pet ownership cost/time commitment required, etc.
- 3) **Free statewide pet owner resources database** – increase access to food pantries, low-cost vet services, etc.

↑ These components will be built by Georgia's own animal control agencies and non-profits.

COST: approx. \$150k per year for 4 years, with an additional \$125k build/startup costs = **\$725k total.**