

Tri-Valley Herald

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No Springtime Litters for These Cats and Dogs

Veterinarians hold free pet spay-and-neuter day

By Lea Blevins, Staff Writer

DUBLIN – More than 100 pet owners heeded the advice of game show host Bob Barker on Thursday: Help control the pet population; have your pet spayed or neutered.

And at the Tri-Valley branch of the East Bay SPCA, controlling the pet population was free-of-charge Tuesday in honor of Spay Day USA.

About 25 employees and volunteers from the SPCA and the Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center assisted SPCA Dr. Heidi Strand and Bishop Ranch Dr. Frank Utchen during the busy day.

Utchen said he had never performed this many cat and dog surgeries in one day but that the hectic atmosphere was worth it. “Overpopulation is a big problem,” he said.

Strand said that in addition to controlling the homeless pet population, spaying and neutering can help prevent cancer and some behavior problems in animals.

The free surgeries were offered to pet owners in low-income households in Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

The procedures last anywhere from five to 15 minutes, with a typical recovery time of two to three days, Utchen said. The typical age for spaying and neutering is four to six months.

The SPCA and Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center sponsored the event, held at the Tri-Valley Spay/Neuter Clinic in Dublin. Pet Food Express donated goody bags of toys for cats and dogs for owners to bring home after the surgeries.

“We’re really excited about all the support we’ve gotten from the community,” said SPCA representative Eliza Fried.

She said the pet owners were happy to get the free surgeries for their animals, remaining patient in the long line Tuesday morning. Many of the owners using the free service were students, Fried said.

Although the morning line may have been long, the clinic staff was working hard.

Throughout the day, employees helped prepare pets for surgery, whether that meant giving the dogs and cats anesthesia or shaving their fur with electric razors.

Other volunteers sat on the floor tending to cats in various states of consciousness, typically taking five to 20 minutes to wake up after surgery. The cats rested on towels or sleepily looked around the room at the other animals and people.

“It takes a team of dedicated people to make this happen,” Fried said.

The starting costs for spaying and neutering at the SPCA are \$60 for cats, \$100 for dogs and \$80 for rabbits. The surgical fees include an antibiotic injection and an injection of pain medication.

Tracey Quartaroli of the Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center said people should look out for other free spay and neutering days held throughout the year for pit bulls and feral cats. “I hope we’ll do this again next year,” she said.

For more information on the East Bay SPCA services, visit www.eastbaysp-ca.org.

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