

Written Testimony in Support of HB 1538

Written by: Emily Kudrna, Co-Kennel Supervisor & Co-Dog Manager, James River Humane Society

To: House Agriculture Committee

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Good morning, my name is Emily Kudrna and I am a Kennel Supervisor and Dog Manager at James River Humane Society, a non-profit, no-kill animal shelter set up to house homeless cats and dogs in our area of North Dakota. I am writing to you in support of HB 1538, to emphasize the importance of spaying and neutering amongst cats and dogs, and how the lack of spayed and neutered cats and dogs in the state of North Dakota has overcrowded many animal shelters and has caused safety concerns amongst our communities.

In my 10+ years of working, fostering, and volunteering for JRHS, I have seen many cats and dogs come through the shelter, both as surrenders by owners, as well as strays found around the city of Jamestown and other areas of North Dakota. In the last year or two, however, those numbers have skyrocketed. We have gone from around 12 dogs at JRHS, each in their own kennel, to up to 35 dogs at a single time, with several dogs sharing indoor kennels (this includes litters of puppies). As I'm sure you can imagine, doubling up on dogs in a kennel environment, surrounded by many other anxious, barking dogs, can cause a very stressful and, ultimately, dangerous environment, for both the dogs and for staff and volunteers. Pets, kittens especially, are often rehomed on social media platforms like Facebook, because they were not planned litters. These kittens and other animals being rehomed are often not spayed/neutered, which only adds to the issue at hand. JRHS's Cat Manager often finds these posts and reaches out to offer assistance with spaying/neutering. On average, JRHS spends about \$6,700 a month on spaying and neutering cats and dogs. This does not include other necessities, such as vaccinations and food.

From what we have noticed, most animals that we have taken in to our shelter in the last year are not spayed or neutered. We take in animals for various reasons, such as if the pet is surrendered to us by their original owner, if it was found as a stray, an unplanned litter (after not spaying their female cat/dog), or because a relative/friend passed away and they don't want/can't keep them. It doesn't matter the circumstance that they come in to us - only a handful of these cats and dogs have been spayed/neutered prior to coming into our care. This speaks volumes as to why rescues and shelters are currently in crisis mode, trying to save and spay/neuter as many animals as possible. On average, we receive 3-4 calls about a cat or dog needing a new home or rescue per week. To put this into perspective, that is about 156-208 animals a year looking for new homes, and this only includes the people that reach out to us at JRHS, nowhere else.

I urge you to consider this bill and the impact it can have on the rescues, shelters, animals, and communities of North Dakota in general.

Thank you,

Emily Kudrna

Co-Kennel Supervisor & Co-Dog Manager

James River Humane Society