

SPAY AND NEUTER VIDEO: Discussion Guide



Introduction

The “It’s Time for Us to Change” video is a public service announcement starring participants of the Nestle Purina PetCare Company summer enrichment program. In July of 2009, leading voices in the local animal welfare movement introduced the teens to the problem of pet overpopulation in the US. As a response, students created social awareness campaigns on animal welfare targeted at peers and neighbors. Once organizers of the St. Louis Petlover Coalition caught wind of the students’ ideas for outreach, they filmed the group, unscripted, advocating for spaying and neutering.

Guidelines for Discussion

Discussing the topic of spaying and neutering pets is known to bring up a diversity of opinions with varying levels of intensity. Some students are notably apathetic while others are staunchly decided; this is the case for either side of the debate. It is also important to keep in mind that any discussion of animal reproduction may raise corollary issues about human sexual behavior and practices.

All Discussion Groups

- Let students know you will be viewing a short video on spaying and neutering and then participating in an open, honest and respectful discussion.
- Invite students to set ground rules for the discussion, which may include:
 - No talking over one another/ “One mic”
 - The right to disagree without feeling bad or wrong
 - Confidentiality
- Look for opportunities during the discussion to divide students into smaller groups. Giving participants the chance to debrief findings to the larger group or to take sides on an issue can make for an enriched learning experience and a livelier debate.

Grades 5 – 6

- Figure out how many students currently own or have owned pets. Figure out what they might know about taking care of a cat or dog or any pet. Ask them if they have ever heard of the terms “spay,” “neuter,” or fix. Invite those who have heard, to give answers. Do not correct any answers you may deem inaccurate yet.
- OR: Ask all students to then complete a KWL chart on animal welfare. On the chart’s corresponding columns, students are to fill in what they know (K), want to know (W), and at the end of the discussion reserve time to have students fill in what they have learned (L).

Grades 7 – 8

- Do a word association game with students in order to warm them up to the idea of pet ownership and responsibility. Sample words may include:
 - Leash, kitten, puppy, pet
 - Home, food, love, parenthood
 - Trapped, shelter, abuse
- OR: In your space, designate a section for “I agree” and one for “I disagree.” Ask students move to the appropriate section of the room depending on whether or not they agree or disagree with the following statements:
 - Eating meat is wrong.
 - I like cats.
 - Pets are property.
 - Pets are people.
 - People deserve better treatment than pets.
 - I do not care about animal welfare.
 - I personally know many people who are big pet lovers.

Depending on time constraints, decide whether or not you want to debrief answers after each statement, at the end, or at all.

VIDEO: VIEWING

DISCUSSION: QUESTIONS

Definitions

What is spay?

What is neuter?

What is euthanasia?

Review

What reasons did youth in the video give for spaying and neutering pets?

Critical Thinking

Given what you know about spaying and neutering, how can two dogs create 67, 000 after only six years? Explain.

How is spaying and neutering linked to euthanasia?

What alternatives can you imagine to stop the unnecessary euthanasia of pets? How would you make those alternatives happen? What would it take to make those alternatives happen?

What is the role of the government in stopping pet overpopulation? What creative laws could you think of to control pet reproduction? Use your imagination!

In My Shoes

What kinds of choices would pet owners have to make when deciding to spay or neuter their animal(s)?

If you knew you *could* make \$800 for each litter your cat/dog produces, would you still choose to spay or neuter your pet? Why or why not.

Who is to blame for the euthanasia of the pets: society (including non-pet owners), pet owners, government, pets, or someone else?

CONCLUSION

At the close the discussion, invite students to review what they have learned. (This is a good time to complete the KWL chart.) Ask what ideas or thoughts they found challenging. Ask them how they think they can make a difference. Let participants know that local resources on animal welfare can be found at <http://www.STLPETLOVER.org>.

DISCUSSION: ANSWER SHEET

Definitions

What is spay?

To surgically remove the reproductive organs of a female (an animal).

What is neuter?

To surgically remove the reproductive organs of a male (an animal).

What is euthanasia?

The act of putting to death painlessly or allowing to die.

Review

What reasons did youth in the video give for spaying and neutering pets?

- *Best, safest thing to do for the dog*
- *To prevent the killing of dogs (pets)/euthanasia and overpopulation*

Critical Thinking

Consider splitting students into smaller groups to answer these questions.

Given what you know about spaying and neutering, how can two dogs create 67, 000 after only six years? Explain.

If an unspayed female dog and her intact male mate produce puppies and none of those puppies are spayed or neutered and none of their puppies are spayed and neutered and so on for six years.

For a visual guide, pass out the SpayUSA one-page handout showing the Dog Pyramid.

How is spaying and neutering linked to euthanasia?

Spaying and neutering is way of controlling the reproduction of litters and therefore the population. If the pet population becomes more manageable, less euthanasia has to occur.

What alternatives can you imagine to stop the unnecessary euthanasia of pets? How would you make those alternatives happen? What would it take to make those alternatives happen?

OPEN – any answer is acceptable.

Note: Challenge the group to come up with viable solutions without being dismissive. Perhaps asking, “What ideas do you have to get around this problem?” will keep the discussion open to possibilities.

Common proposals have included:

- *Make more room: Build enough shelters – problem: it could take billions of dollars to build enough shelters for animals.*
- *Find homes: Adopt out all the pets – problem: not enough people are willing to adopt animals.*

What is the role of the government in stopping pet overpopulation? What creative laws could you think of to control pet reproduction? Use your imagination!

OPEN

In My Shoes

What kinds of choices would pet owners have to make when deciding to spay or neuter their animal(s)?

OPEN

If you knew you could make \$800 for each litter your cat/dog produces, would you still choose to spay or neuter your pet? Why or why not?

OPEN

Who is to blame for the euthanasia of the pets: society (including non-pet owners), pet owners, government, pets, or someone else? Consider splitting students into teams according to their answers; facilitate a mini-debate.

OPEN

