

The **Oklahoma Spay Network** has reviewed the results of the enactment and enforcement of spay/ neuter ordinances in Oklahoma cities and towns. While the impact varies, Tulsa, Lawton and Claremore have had significant success in reducing shelter intakes through these ordinances.

One year ago, the City of Claremore passed a spay neuter ordinance that compels pet owners to get pets altered. According to former Senior Animal Control Officer Jennifer Cummings, the intake of litters as compared to the same time as the previous year dropped by roughly half. Cummings noted that killing puppies and kittens is a completely avoidable tragedy that is hard on the staff and the city as well.

Cummings credited their success to a local, low-income spay neuter program operated by the ARK, a private animal hospital in Claremore. The ordinance provides her officers with the ability to compel pet owners to get their pets altered and the local program enables low-income pet owners to follow through.

The 2007 passage of a strong spay/ neuter ordinance in Lawton has resulted in reduced shelter intakes, reduced shelter euthanasias and an increase in owner reclaims as well. Lawton Animal Control supervisor, Rose Wilson credits the owner reclaims with the fact that once pets are spayed or neutered the owner feels some sense of investment in the animal. She also noted that owners are less likely to relinquish pets that do not develop the multitude of behavior problems associated with being unneutered.

The Lawton ordinance also prohibits street sales of live animals. Lawton passed the first anti-chaining law in Oklahoma.

Lawton City Manager, Larry Mitchell said the decision to create a spay neuter ordinance was, “A team effort to address what we felt was an excessive euthanasia rate. This was the work of the mayor, our city council and Rose Wilson and we’re very proud of the outcome.” Since passage of the spay neuter ordinance euthanasias in Lawton have declined by roughly 40 percent annually.

The 2008 decision to begin enforcement of the Tulsa pet sterilization ordinance also resulted in a decrease in intakes. Most large cities in our region have experienced increases in intakes while Tulsa’s have gone down.

Judy Kishner, President of SPAY Oklahoma said, “This is a matter of common sense. A spay neuter ordinance gets to the heart of the problem. It does not make sense that we can stop the euthanasias adopting out one by one when they are produced in litters that can be ten or more. Unfortunately, some people do not act responsibly without some urging by city codes.”