

VSNIIP FACT SHEET

The Vermont Spay-Neuter Incentive Program (VSNIIP) was created by statute in 2004 to utilize a portion of dog license fees to fund spay/neuter surgeries for low-income Vermonters' cats and dogs. VSNIIP began subsidizing surgeries in 2006.

A Windsor County resident has requested the introduction of a bill that would name her nonprofit organization as VSNIIP's one and only fiscal agent. This VSNIIP Fact Sheet addresses this request.

- 1. Claim:** State law requires a third-party contractor to administer VSNIIP.
Truth: Statute 20 V.S.A. § 3815. Dog, cat, and wolf-hybrid spaying and neutering program, states: "The agency shall implement the program through an agreement with a qualified organization consistent with the applicable administrative rules." There is no mention of a third-party contractor in the VSNIIP Rules.
- 2. Claim:** Vermont legislators should pass a law naming a particular organization as the fiscal agent of the VSNIIP program.
Truth: A law that would limit VSNIIP's administration to a particular organization would create a monopoly that would prohibit the State from taking bids from potentially better administrators. Such a law could force the dissolution of VSNIIP if that particular organization ceased to exist.
- 3. Claim:** VSNIIP has been "abruptly shut down."
Truth: VSNIIP ran out of funding in FY 2014, but began issuing vouchers again when funds became available. VSNIIP, and programs like VSNIIP across the country, often run out of money temporarily because demand usually exceeds funding.
Truth: There is no possibility that the entire demand for low-cost pet sterilization can be met under the current VSNIIP funding scheme. This has nothing to do with who has been administering the program.
- 4. Claim:** VSNIIP ran out of funding because of mysterious accounting devoid of transparency.
Truth: All the pertinent accounting information is posted at www.vsnip.org.
- 5. Claim:** VSNIIP ran out of funding because veterinarian reimbursement rates are too high.
Truth: VSNIIP ran out of funding because more VSNIIP vouchers were issued and redeemed in calendar year 2013 than in any other year, including more costly dog vouchers than were issued in past years.

 - Approximately 2,900 total vouchers redeemed in 2013 vs. average of 2,100 (average of complete program years 2007 through 2013).
 - Approximately 1,320 dog vouchers redeemed in 2013 vs. average of 785 for previous years
- 6. Claim:** A different fiscal agent for VSNIIP could "fix" veterinarian reimbursement rates that are too high.

Truth: Past veterinarian reimbursement rates were much lower than the statewide median for spay/neuter surgeries. See attached email from the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association entitled “Recent VSNIP Petition.”

Truth: The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA), Vermont Humane Federation (VHF) and other stakeholders recognize that DCF (the current administrator of the VSNIP program) is committed to distributing these services in as fair and consistent a manner as possible with the funds available, and to reviewing the program and making improvements when possible.

7. **Claim:** Animal populations have drastically increased in the period since VSNIP ran out of funding.

Truth: Vermont animal shelter data indicate a *continuation of the decline* in shelter cat and kitten intake*, a *decrease* in euthanasia rates, and an *increase* in live-release rates.

Truth: Since VSNIP began, it has been used to fund an average of 13 cat and dog surgeries per month, per county. This number spread out statewide does not significantly impact total Vermont dog and cat population. VSNIP’s greater importance is for individual animals and pet owners.

*Vermont primarily strives to reduce unwanted feline births. Vermont is exemplary and unique in that canine overpopulation has not been a concern in the state for decades. Shelters and rescue groups routinely transport puppies and dogs into Vermont from high-kill states to have adoptable canines available for families seeking dogs.

Additionally, some Vermont shelters have begun transporting in kittens due to low numbers, though adult cat overpopulation remains a major issue. The shelters that are “importing” animals to meet demand are located in areas with access to high-volume spay/neuter clinics, which have measurably reduced cat populations in those regions.