

**HISTORY:** Thanks to now retired Lynn Murrell, DVM, a program began to help cats and dogs, cared for by income challenged Vermonters with a reduced rate for neutering and vaccinations. A statewide program began under VT Volunteer Services for Animals Humane Society, aka "VVSA." Our program evolved to state oversight, assuring this service would be viable and sustainable as it grew. VVSA helped draft legislation, **passing in one session** with both the House and full Senate's approval. Only one Representative voted not to support. Because of Dr. Murrell's visionary altruism, many thousands of animals have been neutered and many more litters avoided. Forty-two years ago, the solution to the overpopulation of healthy animals was routine euthanasia, hard on the humane societies and veterinary offices, as one can imagine. This is no longer the case. Vermont is one of the few states that can make this statement, thanks to our participating veterinarians and the VT Spay Neuter Incentive Program, aka "VSNIP."

**CURRENTLY:** Continuing to serve income challenged Vermonters under the Department of Children & Families/VT Economic Services is contracted to VVSA. On average, **\$55,000.00 of vouchers are approved monthly.**

**VSNIP is funded only by a \$4.00 addition to licensing dogs.** Our fear is that the funds will again run out, as they had four years ago, halting the issuance of vouchers for three months. Statewide, animals were unable to be helped, causing a multitude of litters, many unable to be placed. Their fate was likely not the best. As the administrator of VSNIP we're aware that even today, 75 % of cats and kittens seeking services are reported as stray or abandoned, some rescued from horrific situations.

**Metting with Deputy Commissioner Miranda Gray, and Economic Benefits Director Nicholle Tousignant, last month, we shared our concerns about running out of funds. The state recognized there was a chance the program could run out of funds prematurely.**

**VSNIP is in need of additional funds in order to keep this important program functioning.** Due to the increase for costs of surgeries, additional funding is needed immediately. **We are requesting amending the Rules to slightly increase the registration fee of dogs by \$2.00 to \$3.00, and the co-payment for services, paid by the applicant, from \$27.00 to \$50.00.** Standard costs of surgeries usually range from \$300.00 to well over \$1,000.00, depending on the species, especially with regard to the weights of dogs.

**Calls were made to over 300 formerly approved applicants asking for their opinion with the rate increase. Every single person agreed,** pointing out that an office visit alone may be over \$100, without procedures added to that cost. **Seniors, most especially, were adamant that they would not be able to neuter their companion animal as most live only on their social security check. They said \$50 was affordable, while without VSNIP, neutering and vaccinations would be impossible.**

We are asking our Senators and Representees for support. **Most importantly, passing it this session.**

Please, do consider helping with this critical necessity. Almost every family or person has a cat or dog, and knows the high cost of providing care for the life their companion over the years. Neutering and vaccinations, especially with a rabies vaccination, is important, all of which are covered by VSNIP.

Thank you sincerely for your help. Together We Can Make a Difference!

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