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Reduce Euthanasia and Spay or Neuter

REASON for Burke

voice of REASON: saving dogs and cats in our county

Winter 2026



state of REASON:
homeless animals?
crowded shelters?

Don't complain.
DO something!

If you can't TNR: Adopt
If you can't Adopt: Foster
If you can't Foster: Sponsor
If you can't Sponsor: Volunteer
If you can't Volunteer: Donate
If you can't Donate: Educate

Be part of the solution!



REASON stands for "Reduce Euthanasia and Spay or Neuter." We promote low-cost spays and neuters to prevent unwanted litters. But the truth is that our county still struggles with pet overpopulation and overcrowded shelters and rescues. It truly takes a village of concerned citizens to make a difference.

What can YOU do to give pets the loving homes they deserve?

Backyard Breeders & Puppy Mills: What to Watch For



As the new year begins, it's a good time to look at a growing issue in our rural area: backyard breeders.

Many families looking for a new pet don't realize the difference between a responsible, ethical breeder and someone who is breeding dogs without proper care, planning, or standards. They hit us with the "cuteness factor" right out the gate, and our hearts rarely hear or see anything else! Our new YouTube slideshow breaks down what backyard breeders and puppy mills are, how they differ from responsible breeders, and how you can spot warning signs before bringing home a new dog.

Backyard breeders are people who breed their pets, often repeatedly, without following basic health, safety, or ethical guidelines. Some do it for extra income, while others simply don't understand the responsibility involved. They may not provide vet checks, genetic testing, or appropriate living conditions. Puppies raised this way can suffer long-term health and behavioral issues, and the cycle continues when unprepared owners buy these puppies.

While puppy mills generally operate on a large scale, backyard breeders usually work on a smaller, more local level. But the harm can be just as serious. Many backyard breeders sell animals through Facebook groups, yard signs, flea markets, or parking-lot meetups. They may have cute photos and friendly messages, but they often avoid letting buyers see where the dogs live or meet the mother. *(continued on page 2)*

(continued from page 1)

These same red flags overlap with puppy mill practices which is why being informed matters.

The slideshow highlights what responsible breeding **should** look like: clean and safe living spaces, complete medical records, transparency, a willingness to answer questions, and a genuine concern for the dog's lifelong well-being. When these things are missing, or you're being pressured to buy, it's a sign to walk away.

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Watch the slideshow on our YouTube Channel; see YT link on next page.

We also explain how backyard breeders and puppy mills continue to operate, often because buyers don't realize the risks. Many people simply want a particular breed or a low-cost puppy and unintentionally support unsafe or inhumane conditions. When we know better, we can make choices that protect both animals and families.

If you're concerned about a breeder in our area, you can contact your local animal control office or sheriff's department with details. You can also

share information with the Humane Society of the United States through their **Puppy Mill Tip Line: 877-MILL-TIP**, which accepts anonymous reports and forwards potential cases to trained investigators.

REASON's mission is to reduce the unnecessary killing of unwanted pets, and there are SO many sweet, adorable, loving dogs (and cats) in our overcrowded shelters that need your TLC. Please consider adopting one of them! Every small step adds up to a safer, healthier community for animals.

Community cat challenges

Wherever you live, chances are that you have community cats living nearby. A community cat is a cat without an owner or a human home. Some of these are former pets (strays) that were abandoned, or lost, or ran away. Most community cats, however, are "wild" (feral) and have never lived with humans. Strays may be friendly or shy,

but ferals are afraid of people and avoid them. Even so, they often live near people because we are still their best source of food.

As tough as cats are (and we know they are!), the life of a stray or feral cat is not easy. They face a lot of challenges that housecats don't have to worry about.

Hunger: Cats are good at finding food, whether they catch it themselves or find it in a dumpster, but they may not always find enough, or the food they find might not be good for them.

Sickness: Many different diseases can get into free-roaming cat colonies, including ringworm, FIV, feline leukemia, and panleukopenia (AKA distemper). They also get parasites, like ear mites and tapeworms - not to mention fleas! Kittens are especially vulnerable, as even a simple "cat cold" can be too much for their young bodies to handle.

Climate: Unlike housecats, community cats are at the mercy of the weather. Winter is the hardest time, especially for kittens and old cats. Of course, heat can be a killer, too - especially for cats that don't have a regular source of water.



Animals:

Community cats also have to put up with some unpleasant neighbors. Free-roaming dogs chase them. Coyotes see them as snacks. Birds of prey might snatch up kittens if they get a chance. Even animals that don't hunt cats, like raccoons, can still spread diseases like rabies if a cat gets in a scuffle with them. Cats can be each other's worst enemies, too, especially males that haven't been neutered. Their fights over females can leave both tomcats with serious injuries.

Cars: The roads we rely on for travel are death traps for small animals, and cats are no exception. Most pet cats spend at least some time safe indoors, but for community cats, the danger is ever present.

People: Not all people are kind to animals, especially ones they regard as pests. Whether from guns, traps, or poison, many community cats have paid the ultimate price for existing where they are not wanted.

Fortunately, there **ARE** many people who appreciate community cats and try to make their lives a little easier. This includes things like providing them with food and water, and sheltered places where they can stay warm and dry. There are organizations that provide neutering and rabies shots and sometimes other veterinary care to community cats, even feral cats that will never be able to live with people. If you want to help, find what groups are active in your neighborhood and ask what you can do.

Open Volunteer Application

Click above or type in browser:
reason-burkenc.org/volunteer/



**Total Spays/Neuters
Supported by REASON
(as of December 31, 2025)**

6,538



**To find out if you qualify for pet
neuter or spay surgery assistance,
contact REASON at 828.403.3675.**

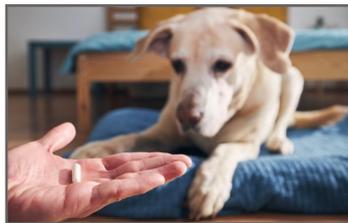
Fido's yearly vet expenses

Wondering how much Fido is going to cost you this year and years down the line? This is dependent on a few factors like breed, size, lifestyle, and age.

Considering adopting? While we look forward to buying cute toys, accessories, and treats for our pup, we also have to consider the expense of vet care. Although this is not the most fun expense, it is a necessary one!

Young dogs (1-3 years old):

That first vet visit with your new pup could cost upwards of \$500! This is dependent on the vaccines and tests needed, preventative care that may need to be purchased, and additional screenings that may be necessary. Beyond that appointment, you will need to consider the cost of spaying or neutering your new buddy. (Ask REASON how we can help with that!)



Senior dogs (8+ years): Older dogs come with their own set of additional needs and expenses. Aging pets are encouraged to have bloodwork done once or twice a year and may have additional supplements and supplies needed to take care of them as they age. Dental care is also a big consideration in aging pets. This brings their yearly vet bill expenses as high as \$500-\$1000 per year.

Doing research on your pup's breed type will be helpful in narrowing down vet expenses even further. For larger dogs, expenses seem to be a bit higher versus smaller breeds. As far as your pup's lifestyle, is he active or sedentary? This comes with its own set of challenges including weight management, exercise-induced injuries, and more.

Everyone dreads that moment when they realize their pet needs emergency care, but it is a possibility for us all. Emergency expenses can be twice to three times as much as treatment received in a non-emergency situation. There are many opportunities for pet insurance to help cover situations like these where expenses can unexpectedly pop up. It is also a good idea to talk with your vet about developing a plan for emergency situations; they may have suggestions for the most cost-effective way to handle an emergency vet visit.

While vet expenses are a consideration, they should not be a surprise. Plan ahead and save for these expenses so Fido can get the care he needs and deserves!

Adult dogs (4-8 years): Yearly vet care for adult dogs can cost between \$75 and \$300 per year for routine care. It will be a bit higher in years where vaccines are due or dental cleanings are performed. Preventatives like heartworm, flea, and tick medication should also be considered, which may cost between \$120-\$420 a year depending on your preferences.



“ For every puppy or kitten your pet gives birth to, one dies in the shelter for lack of a home ... Spay/Neuter.— Brooklyn Hudson, Director, Screenwriter, Filmmaker ”



5 ways to get information from REASON

Did you know that REASON posts valuable information on the internet? From our website to social media accounts, you can read tips or get updates on our spay/neuter schedules.

Our website

Copy and paste this web address in a browser to open our website:

<https://reason-burkenc.org/>

Our YouTube channel

Copy and paste this web address in a browser to view our YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@REASON-SpayorNeuter>

Our Facebook page

Copy and paste this web address in a browser to view our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/REASON.SpayNeuter>

Our Instagram account

Copy and paste this web address in a browser to view our Instagram videos:

https://www.instagram.com/n_burkenc/

Our email address

You can contact us directly by sending an email to the REASON webmaster:

webmaster@reason-nc.org

Remember: Please like, follow, or subscribe to our social media to get the latest updates.

Cats and their love affair with cardboard boxes



You buy an expensive toy for your cat; he ignores the toy and plays with the box.

Has this happened to you? If so, you're not alone, because most cats love cardboard boxes. And they have good reasons for their feelings.

Boxes stimulate a cat's hunting and stalking instinct

Your cat's ancestors needed to sneak up on their prey before pouncing on it, and your cat has that same hunting instinct. He can hide in a box to surprise another pet, a toy, or a human who walks by. Hiding in his box lets him practice his hunting skills.

Boxes provide safe, stress-free shelters

In your cat's mind, he needs to squeeze into a small, confined space when he's feeling stressed by loud noises, strange activities, or new settings. He inherited this behavior from his feline ancestors who hid in caves or dens to be safe from nearby predators. A small, enclosed cardboard box is the perfect hiding place where your cat can curl up to watch the action without being seen.

A 2019 study found that shelter cats who had boxes as a hideaway had lower stress levels than those who didn't have a box. And **Best Friends Animal Society** recommends setting up a box (with entrance holes on at least one side) to help a newly-adopted cat feel safe in his new home.

Boxes make warm, comfy beds

Cats sleep in sunny spots or near heat sources because they love temperatures that are warmer than most of us find comfortable. If your home is colder than your cat likes, then he can keep warm by sleeping in a cozy, insulated cardboard box where his body heat is trapped inside the box.

Not only is a cardboard box warm; it's also comfy for cat napping. Cardboard is soft and pliable because of its multilayered design and can mold itself around your cat's body.

Boxes stimulate your cat's curiosity

Cats are curious by nature with a powerful nose that's about 14 times stronger than a human's nose. A new box has traveled across many different places to reach his home, and your cat's nose tells him this box with many strange scents must be inspected, sniffed, and explored. He may even claim ownership by rubbing his face against the box to transfer scent from the glands inside his cheek.

In addition, many store-bought cat toys can have a strong chemical smell that cats will avoid. Cardboard has a natural smell that is more pleasing to your cat's sensitive nose.

Boxes provide mental stimulation

Cats are intelligent animals and need mental stimulation to keep from being bored. Cardboard boxes come in a variety of textures, shapes, and sizes that are good for shredding, chewing, or pouncing on.

Boxes are perfect for scratching

Scratching is a normal instinct among cats. Cats will scratch items to "talk" with other cats, sharpen their claws, and deposit pheromones from the scent glands located in their paws.

Cats are drawn to cardboard boxes because of the texture. The rough surface of cardboard is the perfect tool for scratching and helps keep their claws sharp and healthy. And wouldn't you rather your cat scratch a cardboard box instead of your furniture?

Boxes help keep a cat's teeth clean

Some cats enjoy chewing on objects to relieve stress or boredom. Plastic toys may be harmful if chewed up and swallowed, while cardboard provides a safe and nontoxic material for cats to chew on. Chewing on cardboard can also help to keep your cat's teeth healthy by removing plaque and tartar.

Yellow Cat & Friends:

"Cats, as we all know, are connoisseurs of fine cardboard."

Boxes appeal to a cat's hearing

Cats, with their advanced hearing, are attracted to the sound of a cardboard box being torn or scratched. This sound creates a sensory experience that captivates their attention.

Boxes provide exercise for your cat

Cats are naturally playful, and cardboard boxes provide a good outlet for play and exercise. From hiding and pouncing to chewing and sniffing every corner, your cat has his own personal gym.

Boxes are just plain fun

Cats like to hang out in boxes just for fun. Why are boxes special fun? It's because your cat can chew or scratch the sides, even demolish the whole box, and not get in trouble for doing so. And although your cat might not care, cardboard is biodegradable, so it's better for the environment and your cat can be your personal recycler.

Summary

To you, a cardboard box might be trash. To your cat, it's a shelter, bed, gym, toy, and stress-relief pod. So next time you get a package, don't toss the cardboard box. Set it down on the floor and watch the magic happen. Your cat will thank you!

Safety note: Cardboard is a safe and nontoxic material for cats to use for play. However, it's important to monitor your cat's playtime to make sure they don't ingest any small pieces or get stuck in a box.



call us:
828-403-3675

email us:

reason.nc.org@gmail.com

write us:

PO Box 633

Rutherford College, NC 28671

REASON's mission:

To eliminate the killing of healthy and unwanted cats, dogs, puppies, and kittens.

We accomplish this by:

- ◆ providing low-cost spay/neuter surgical fee assistance through partnerships with private practice veterinarians and low-cost clinics,
- ◆ collaborating with other animal welfare groups,
- ◆ promoting education on the humane treatment of animals.

