

Canadian comedian and CBC star Gerry Dee to appear in Charlottetown on Nov. 22.

Blue Rodeo marks 25 years with Warner Music by releasing box set of remastered albums.



# The right choice

*Spaying, neutering make a difference in pet health*

Unfortunately, there are nowhere near enough homes for all the cats and dogs born in Canada each year.

It is worse for cats — the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies estimates that half the cats admitted to animal shel-

ters in Canada are euthanized, some due to disease but many more due to the lack of an adoptive home. The good news is that progress is being made on P.E.I., thanks to caring individuals, responsible pet owners and animal welfare organizations.

Cats can easily produce three litters per year starting as early as four months of age, with five or more kittens per litter.

Dogs are also prolific. It is easy to see how the offspring quickly outnumber available homes. Homeless animals generally live short, difficult lives — two years on average — until they are run over, fall ill through injury or disease or die due to some other cause.

To reduce this animal suffering, it is important to focus on where the problem begins: animal overpopulation.

Prince Edward Island has three animal welfare organizations working hard to address this.

The P.E.I. Humane Society takes in any animals that are surrendered or found as strays, has several programs to maximize adoptions, and strives to ensure that no cat, dog or rabbit is adopted from the shelter without first being spayed or neutered.

The Cat Action Team (C.A.T.) was founded in 2000 to spay and neuter ("trap, neuter, return") and care for feral cats. Over 7,000 feral and barn cats have been spayed and neutered to date.

SpayAid P.E.I. assists low-income Islanders to spay/neuter their pets.

Over 1,200 pets have been through the program since it was established in July 2007 with participating Island veterinarians donating one-third of the costs, SpayAid fundraising sponsoring one-third, and the animal owner paying the remaining third.

Thankfully, these efforts are showing results. Take cats, for example. Since 2007, the number coming into the care of the P.E.I. Humane Society each year has dropped by 25 per cent. Over the same period, the number of cats euthanized dropped by 54 per cent and the number of cat adoptions has increased by 20 per cent.

Besides the importance of spay/neuter to control pet overpopulation, these surgeries prevent or reduce medical issues such as uterine and mammary cancer in females and testicular cancer and prostate problems in males. Spay/neuter reduces infection in both male and female cats with two serious illnesses — FIV (feline



Third-year veterinary student Gillian Marsh holds Cherry, a cat recovering from spay surgery at the Atlantic Veterinary College. Cherry has returned to the P.E.I. Humane Society and is available for adoption. PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GUARDIAN BY UPEI PHOTOGRAPHY

immunodeficiency virus) and FeLV (feline leukemia virus).

While leaving the animal's basic personality unchanged, neutering reduces male sexual behaviours such as mounting, aggression, roaming and (in cats) urine spraying. You will avoid the incon-

venience of a female in heat or a litter of young ones to deal with and a male cat will be much less likely to come home with an abscess or other battle scar.

Pets should be neutered before sexual maturity (four to five months of age). If getting a new dog or

cat, choose to adopt an animal from the P.E.I. Humane Society.

People can also help by supporting P.E.I. animal welfare organizations through volunteering or making a donation. For example, SpayAid has a Sponsor a Spay program through which a small monthly donation can lead directly to the spaying or neutering of a dog, cat, or rabbit.

There is still a long way to go toward solving pet overpopulation on P.E.I., but working together

everyone can help to make a difference.

Animal Talk is a monthly column in The Guardian by the P.E.I. Companion Animal Welfare Initiative (CAWI), whose goal is to improve the welfare of owned and unowned companion animals on P.E.I. CAWI consists of the P.E.I. Humane Society, SpayAid, Cat Action Team, P.E.I. Veterinary Medical Association, Department of Agriculture and Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre at the Atlantic Veterinary College. Links to each of these groups are at [gov.pe.ca/agriculture/CAWI](http://gov.pe.ca/agriculture/CAWI). Readers are invited to send questions related to the well-being of owned and unowned companion animals to [cawipei@gmail.com](mailto:cawipei@gmail.com).

## A happy ending



PEIHS alumnus Jack is shown with his best friend, Miranda Garnhum. Jack was adopted as a puppy from the PEIHS in January 2009. His owners report that adding Jack to their lives was "the best decision we could have made as a family." PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GUARDIAN BY BUFFY BOILY

### AT A GLANCE

#### Quick questions

► **What about other pets?**

Pet rabbits should be neutered for similar health, behaviour and overpopulation reasons as dogs and cats. Pet ferrets must be neutered to prevent aggression in males, serious anemia associated with long heat cycles in females, and a strong musky odour in both.

► **Do pets gain weight after neutering?**

Like people, pets gain weight if they take in more calories than they use. Weight gain may occur gradually after neutering due to a reduced metabolic rate, reduced activity as your pet matures, and the decrease or elimination of reproductive-related behaviours like roaming and fighting in males. To avoid this, it is best to slightly decrease a pet's food intake after spay/neutering. Check his/her weight occasionally at a veterinary clinic or with home scales.



Timothy, a mini rex, is recovering nicely at his new home after being neutered. He was recently adopted by Jocelyne and Simon Lloyd and their children, Grace and Vaughan. GUARDIAN PHOTO

Give treats sparingly and in very small pieces. Remember, pets can't open their own food packages.

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