



Maryland Department of Agriculture

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Maryland Department of Agriculture

Legislative Comment

Date: March 24, 2021

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 146

SHORT TITLE: Department of Agriculture - Spay/Neuter Fund - Extension and Fee on
Commercial Feed

MDA POSITION: Information

House Bill 146 reauthorizes the Spay and Neuter Grant Program at the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), which is set to sunset on September 30, 2022. As amended, HB 146 requires MDA to report to the General Assembly on the Spay and Neuter Fund, including:

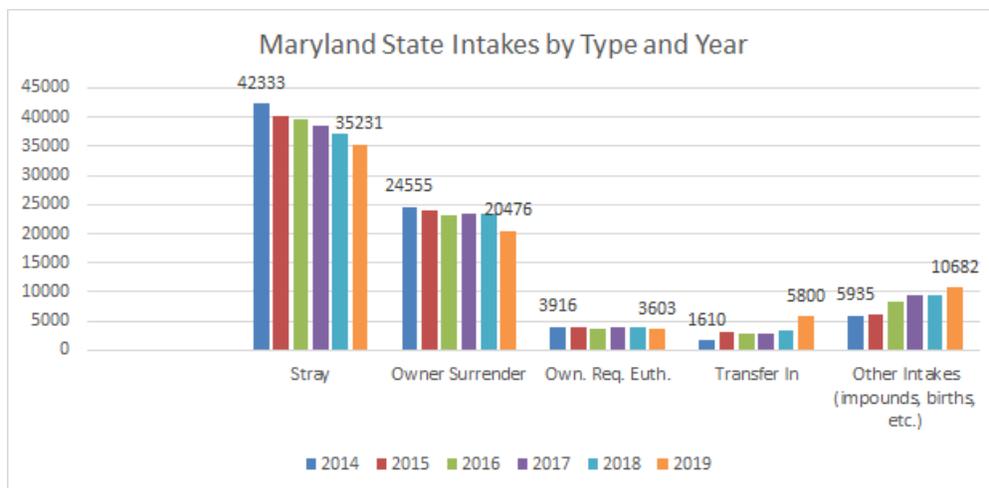
1. spay and neuter programs that are not receiving funding from the fund;
2. the market capacity for increasing the fees assessed on each brand name or product name of commercial feed that are paid into the fund; and
3. a proposed fee structure that can be implemented over the next 5 to 10 years to enhance the revenue generated from the fees.

The Spay and Neuter Grants Program was established by the Maryland General Assembly during the 2013 legislative session. A seven-member advisory board, appointed by the Maryland Secretary of Agriculture, reviews all grant applications and provides recommendations to the Secretary on how grants should be administered.

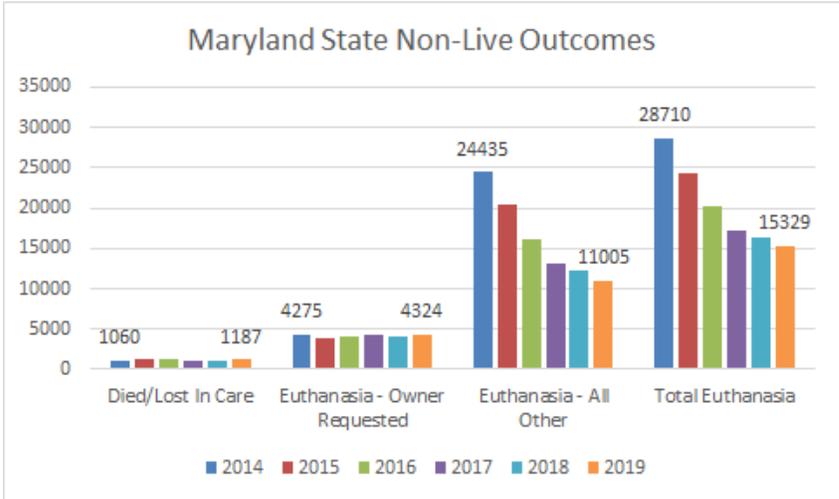
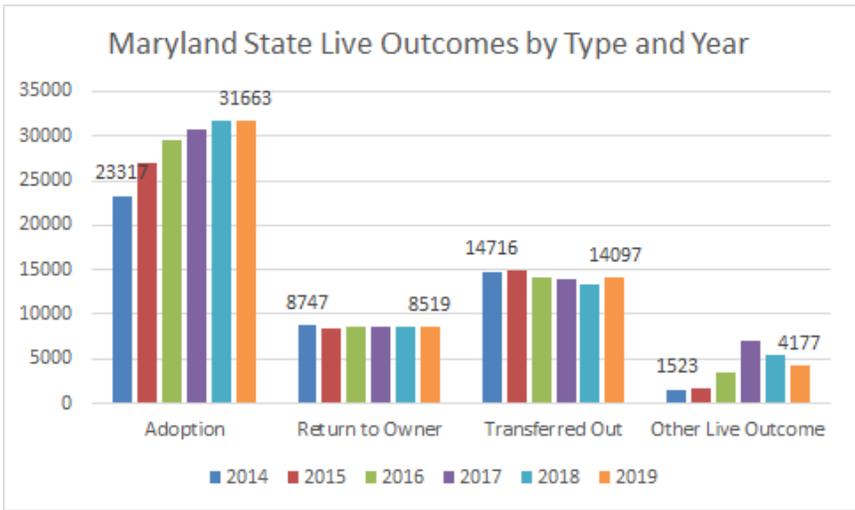
Since its inception, the program has awarded \$5,110,000.00 in grants that has funded 182 projects to spay and neuter owned pet cats and dogs of low income families, and feral cats. This includes two ongoing projects from FY19, 16 ongoing projects from FY20, and 28 new projects starting in FY21. To date these projects have resulted in 70,916 spay and neuter surgeries. With another 17,688 surgeries already funded in the existing projects, and the projects to be selected from the FY22 grant applications (which are currently being accepted), the program expects to break 100,000 surgeries completed before the initial projected sunset date. These projects have touched all 24 counties in Maryland.

MDA believes the Spay and Neuter Grants Program is currently well funded and operating as designed and envisioned. There is no current need to increase fees at this time.

The Spay and Neuter Grants Program has been fortunate that a way to evaluate the program's effectiveness was built into it. Every quarter, the program collects data from shelters across the state. This data includes the number and type of shelter intakes (strays, owner surrenders, transfers from other organizations, etc.) as well as the number and type of shelter outcomes (adoptions, returned to owner, euthanasia, etc.). Based on the information collected from 2015 to 2019 (data for 2020 is still being collected), all metrics show that shelters in Maryland are moving in the right direction. In 2019, stray and owner surrendered animals are down 16% (about 11,000 cats and dogs) from what they were in 2014. There are only two types of intakes that increased: transferred in and the "all other" categories. A possible explanation for the increase in transfers is that shelters not as overburdened as they once were are able to transfer animals between shelters to balance populations and prevent euthanasia. The "all other" category includes animals that are taken in for Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) or groups that process them into their animal inventory before releasing.



The most noticeable changes are in the outcomes. Adoptions are up 26% from 2014, while most other live outcome metrics have stayed relatively unchanged. For non-live outcomes, most metrics have remained the same except for euthanasia not requested by owner. Euthanasia requested by owner is typically due to age, illness, or injury, and so no change is expected in these categories. All other euthanasia, which includes euthanasia that occurred at the discretion of the shelters is down 55%. These are typically done due to lack of space or dangerous behavior, and as such is the metric most related to the target goal of the Spay and Neuter Grants Program. With the reduction of shelter intakes, shelters across the state are not forced to euthanize for space as often.



If you have additional questions, please contact Cassie Shirk, Director of Legislation and Governmental Affairs, at cassie.shirk@maryland.gov or 410-841-5886.