

## Pets' Trust

The Miami Herald Editorial  
[HeraldEd@MiamiHerald.com](mailto:HeraldEd@MiamiHerald.com)

Voters in Miami-Dade County have come through for community-college students, vulnerable children and indigent patients. They should do the same for the lost and stray animals of this community.

It's not an issue of warm and fuzzy, it's one of health, safety, smart economics — and giving the county's inadequately funded Department of Animal Services a boost.

Right now, the county shelter receives up to 37,000 dogs and cats each year. On average, 20,000 of these animals are killed instead of adopted. And get this: It costs taxpayers \$300 to house, then ultimately euthanize these mostly healthy animals. That's where the Pets' Trust wants to make an enduring difference.

The item on the Nov. 6 ballot will not create the Pets' Trust. But a good public showing of support will give the County Commission the go-ahead to seriously consider creating this agency.

Voters will be asked if they are willing to pay a tax of \$10 per \$100,000 of property value, which would help provide free or low-cost spaying and neutering of strays. The goal is to make Miami-Dade a no-kill county, reduce the stray pet population and get more animals adopted, all good goals.

In Jacksonville, considered the model, animal euthanasia is down 66 percent; and the stray-pet population is down 30 percent. That also means fewer disease-carrying animals on the streets and the reduced risk of dog bites and attacks.

In Miami-Dade, mobile units would pick up strays and spay or neuter them for a cost of about \$60. (A smart bargain when compared to the cost of euthanizing.) Cats would be returned to the streets, but unable to reproduce.

The Pets' Trust must not duplicate the efforts of the overwhelmed animal services, but rather make the department's job easier in the long term, with fewer strays to handle.

We realize that with all the problems facing Miami-Dade County during these still difficult, but improving, economic times, it's tempting to disregard the proposed Pets' Trust as a do-gooder's dream and tick off all the other issues the county must tackle.

But if correctly implemented, the Pets' Trust can help make streets safer for everyone and get more animals adopted, rather than killed. The Herald recommends YES to ballot item No. 240 on the Pets' Trust.

---

© 2012 Miami Herald Media Company. All Rights Reserved.  
<http://www.miamiherald.com>