



Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

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Department of Agricultural Resources Distributes First Spay/Neuter Vouchers for Homeless Dogs in Massachusetts

BOSTON – Friday, July 11, 2014 – The Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) today distributed the first vouchers from the Massachusetts Animal Fund's Spay/Neuter Program, which offers free spay/neuter surgery and rabies vaccinations to homeless dogs and cats, as well as dogs and cats owned by low-income families in Massachusetts.

"While there are many dogs and cats across the Commonwealth in loving homes, there are many who live in unsafe conditions on their own," said DAR Commissioner Greg Watson. "The Spay/Neuter Program is an important part in improving the lives of these animals and making our communities safer."

The Massachusetts Animal Fund has partnered with municipal animal control officers to identify the state's most vulnerable animals, and veterinary practices that are committed to providing surgery and vaccination at a reduced rate. Animal homelessness poses a public safety concern and costs taxpayers money for services dealing with stray, abandoned and feral animals and their offspring.

Since 2013, the Massachusetts Animal Fund has raised \$434,000 solely through a voluntary tax check-off on Line 32f of the Massachusetts resident income tax form to help with their efforts end animal homelessness in the Commonwealth. Residents are now able to make direct online donations at <https://www.paybill.com/massanimalfund>. DAR and the Massachusetts Animal Fund encourage residents of the Commonwealth to invest in the responsible care of animals.

North Shore Animal Hospital was the first veterinary practice to sign up as a Spay/Neuter provider. They are also one of the first recipients of a voucher, which will be used on a small, male, mixed-breed stray dog who was found in Chelsea, brought to their shelter on June 4, and will available for adoption after the procedure.

"Until now, shelters have had no regular guaranteed source of funding for stray animals and must rely on donations and support from local veterinarians," said Lauren Lacey of North Shore Animal Hospital. "The Massachusetts Animal Fund Spay/Neuter Voucher Program will allow people to provide their pets with needed veterinary care. This assistance program will help so many animals have happy and healthy lives."

The second voucher was requested by Coral Hope, the animal control officer for the city of Melrose, for a homeless female dog. Her spay surgery will also be performed at North Shore Animal Hospital before she is made available for adoption.

Residents with demonstrated financial need interested in receiving a no-cost voucher from the Spay/Neuter Voucher Program should contact their municipal animal control officer to request assistance. Municipal animal control facilities interested in receiving a no-cost voucher for a homeless animal in their care should contact Lauren Gilfeather at lauren.gilfeather@state.ma.us.

The Massachusetts Animal Fund, administered by [DAR](#) with assistance from an [advisory committee](#), was established by [Chapter 193 of the Acts of 2012](#) to respond the problem of animal homelessness. Residents can make direct online donations at <https://www.paybill.com/massanimalfund>.



DAR’s mission is to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions – Agricultural Conservation & Technical Assistance, Agricultural Markets, Animal Health, and Crop and Pest Services – DAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the rich diversity of the Commonwealth’s agricultural community to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health measures, and fulfill agriculture’s role in energy conservation and production. For more information, visit DAR’s website at www.mass.gov/agr, and/or follow at twitter.com/mdarcommish.

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