

Cheryl Wicks: Love or labor?

Cheryl WicksColumnist

February 14, 2019

I hope lovers young and old had a wonderful Valentine's Day and enjoyed special time with those they love and those they are loved by. This a fun holiday with lots of hugs and kisses and cards and chocolates and flowers and dinners out.

Unfortunately, in the animal kingdom it's not so loving. About this time the female cats and dogs go into heat and the mating begins, resulting in lots of unwanted births and overcrowded shelters. Too few people try to solve the problem while others irresponsibly allow these matings to take place. Rarely do these people care for the unwanted young.

Last year Sammie's Friends took in approximately 400 kittens, while AnimalSave and the Grass Valley Shelter took in quite a number as well. That's a lot of kittens for a few good Samaritans to take care of. We get them spayed/neutered and vaccinated before they are adopted.

If we think of ourselves, we think of the joys of a new baby and raising that child and being there for the grandchildren and making a lifetime of family memories. In the cat and dog world you get pregnant because you are in estrus (commonly referred to as being "in heat") and any available male within a mile who can get to you will likely decide to mate with you, whether you like it or not. You carry those babies for around two months, give birth, get suckled until everything has been sucked out of you and then your babies are given away. What fun! Many times the babies go to less than desirable homes and the whole thing starts over. What a life, eh?

Each year at Sammie's Friends we receive kittens that have been found in someone's mail box, puppies in boxes and sacks along the road, animals left in other people's garages. Who are these cowardly people that think an animal's life is no more valuable than a sack of garbage to be thrown out?

Cats can go into heat as early as four to five months old. That is like your 10 or 11-year-old daughter being pregnant. I don't think most people would approve of that. Dogs get pregnant as young as 8 months old. These young bodies are not well-developed enough to have babies. It is very hard on these poor animals, to have so little time to be kitties and puppies themselves.

Although we are in the beginning stages of the mating season for cats, they can have repeated heat cycles throughout the year. Dogs can go into heat as many as three times per year. We do not see as many puppies as we do kittens, but there are way too many. You can know that anytime you see puppies and kittens in a shelter, someone has been irresponsible, and it's not the shelter or rescue workers or the animals.

Please people, spay and/or neuter your pets. It's urgent now before the mating begins. There are two low income spay/neuter clinics to utilize: Animal Spay and Neuter Clinic 530-889-8800 and AnimalSave 530-477-1706.

Sammie's Friends provides vouchers for cats and dogs except Chihuahuas, Pitbulls, Huskies, Malamutes. Those four breeds will be paid for by Pound Puppy Rescue. Call 530-272-1716 to arrange.

Sammie's Friends wishes for lots of love and a happy life for all beings, two and four legged, finned and feathered.

Cheryl Wicks is the Co-Founder and President of Sammie's Friends

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