

By the numbers

Year	Total intake	Surrendered by owner	Adopted	Euthanized
2000	10,655	2,029	1,550	7,464
2001	11,301	2,431	2,081	7,553
2002	12,741	3,245	2,328	8,236
2003	13,327	3,665	2,564	9,218
2004	14,683	4,669	3,054	9,462
2005	15,623	5,524	2,962	10,703
2006	16,240	5,411	3,329	10,961

Source: Lee County Animal Services

population. Animal control officers conduct regular sweeps of problem neighborhoods, rounding up strays that would otherwise breed and produce still more animals for which there are no homes.

The agency conducts low-cost microchip ID clinics periodically. That way strays can be quickly reunited with their owners, bypassing the shelter altogether and freeing up space.

On Saturday, Nov. 3, Animal Services will partner with several other area animal welfare groups for the seventh annual Fall Pet Fest, a day of family activities aimed at promoting adoption and sterilization.

It's a good way to attract people to the shelter," says Brown. "It also shows first-hand how many homeless animals there are in Lee County and how many great pets you can adopt from a shelter or a rescue group. There's no reason to purchase a pet, especially when so many are dying."

This year, Animal Services also launched the NASA (Neuter and Spay Always) Spay Station, a mobile surgical unit that makes scheduled stops

throughout the county so that people with limited income and transportation can get their pets sterilized. The money for the state-of-the-art veterinary clinic on wheels came from license fees pet owners pay to the county.

The mobile unit charges \$20 per pet. For those on public assistance, it's free. Besides the surgery, pets get vaccines and microchip IDs. Demand for the service is high, with the weekly clinics booked up through Nov. 20.

Bridget Trosterud of Lehigh Acres

"It won't make a difference if the owned animal is more adoptable. The law requires us to keep strays for 5 days. If people absolutely have to surrender a pet, they should exhaust all other possibilities before bringing it to a government shelter because our hands are tied."

took her two cats, Cali and Cartman, to the van two weeks ago when it parked at the Lakes Regional Library in south Fort Myers.

Currently a math major at Florida Gulf Coast University, "money's tight," she says. "I'm paying for this out of my savings account."

Alpha Parke Williams of south Fort Myers didn't pay anything to have her 2-year-old cat, B.G., neutered.

"There's no charge because I'm on disability and I'm 65," she says. "It's the greatest thing."

She brought the Animal Services staff homemade brownies to express her gratitude.

Veterinarian Chris Taylor divides his time between his own practice, Lighthouse Pet Clinic in Lehigh Acres, and Animal Services' in-house clinic and mobile unit.

He says he can perform between 15 and 20 sterilizations a day on the van.

While that may seem like an insignificant number, consider these statistics provided by the Humane Society of the United States: a fertile dog can produce two litters of six to 10 puppies a year. A cat can give birth to three litters of four to six kittens in a year. And then those offspring can do the same thing. In a matter of five or six years, that can mean hundreds of thousands more homeless pets.

Taylor urges all pet owners to sterilize their pets.

"It's not better for them to have a litter first," he says. "Early spaying will help prevent mammary cancer later on."

As for the males, "they need to be neutered before 9 months of age," he says, before they learn to lift their legs and urinate on the furniture.

"Neuter them early and they won't do that," he says. "It also stops roaming. A neutered dog doesn't roam looking for

If you go

**>> What:** Seventh annual Fall Pet Fest  
**>> When:** 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday  
**>> Where:** Lee County Animal Services, 5600 Banner Drive (off Six Mile Cypress Drive behind the Lee County Sheriff's Office), Fort Myers  
**>> Why:** This benefit for the Lee County Animal Care Trust Fund features fun and games for pets and their people as well as dozens of homeless pets awaiting loving homes. There will be contests, including best costume and dancing with dogs; a dog fashion show; flyball, agility and obedience demonstrations; a marketplace with vendors offering pet goods and services; games; music; a raffle and a silent auction. Several area shelters and rescue groups will be on hand with adoptable animals.  
**>> Info:** Call Lee County Animal Services at 432-2083 or visit [www.LeeLostPets.com](http://www.LeeLostPets.com)

girls."

Judie Piccola, a long-time animal advocate who runs SPAY-LEE, a group devoted to promoting pet sterilization, says, "We're making some progress in overall numbers, but we're not getting enough of a handle on the problem. Responsible pet owners are getting their animals spayed and neutered. Their animals are not reproducing. For others, whether it's cultural or just not an issue, they are continuing to cause the problem here."

And so the animals keep piling up at Animal Services, more of them every year. Without a change in public attitude, thousands more animals are destined to be destroyed.

"There's an end of the line somewhere and your government shelter is it," says Brown. "This is where they end up and we're forced to make the decision about which ones stay and which ones go." ■

# LMHS board meetings now on TV

Lee Memorial Health System Board of Director meetings and Trauma District meetings will be held in the Lee County Public Education Center, 2855 Colonial Boulevard, Fort Myers. The monthly meetings, which begin at 6 p.m., will be televised in Fort Myers on Comcast Cable Channel 20. In Cape Coral, meetings can be seen on Comcast Cable Channel 17. The meetings will be broadcast live and it is anticipated they will be re-broadcast at a later date and time.

The LMHS directors hope that evening meetings will encourage public attendance, and that televising the meetings will benefit interested community members unable to attend the evening meetings.

Questions about the board meetings may be directed to 334-5370 and a schedule of upcoming meetings can be found online at [www.leememorial.org](http://www.leememorial.org) - click on "Event Calendar" and then Board of Directors. If you click on a specific meeting you will receive the tentative agenda for that meeting. Tentative agendas are posted the Monday before the full Board of Directors meetings held on Thursdays.

The citizens of Lee County publicly elect the 10-member Board of Directors. The Board holds regularly scheduled monthly meetings and convenes weekly committee meetings to hear goals, objectives and recommendations from the System's administrative and medical staffs. ■

# JetBlue adds new routes to New York cities

JetBlue Airways will add even more snowbird service this winter with the addition of daily nonstop service from Buffalo and White Plains to Fort Myers. Both routes will operate once daily from Jan. 8 - April 30, with introductory fares priced at just \$84 each way.

"From Westchester to Western New York, JetBlue takes being New York's hometown airline seriously," said Marty St. George, the airline's vice president of network planning. "JetBlue offers customers unmatched amenities and an award-winning travel experience, and today we're pleased to add more of this signature ser-

vice right here in our backyard."

JetBlue's new nonstop service to Southwest Florida International Airport complements its existing low-fare service between Buffalo Niagara International Airport and Boston, Fort Lauderdale (starts Nov. 1) New York/JFK, and Orlando (starts Nov. 15); and between Westchester County Airport and Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, and West Palm Beach. In addition, JetBlue offers its unique brand of low-fares and top-notch customer service between Florida and five other airports in the Empire State including Newburgh, New York/JFK, New York/LaGuardia, Rochester, and Syracuse. ■


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