



# The Big Snip

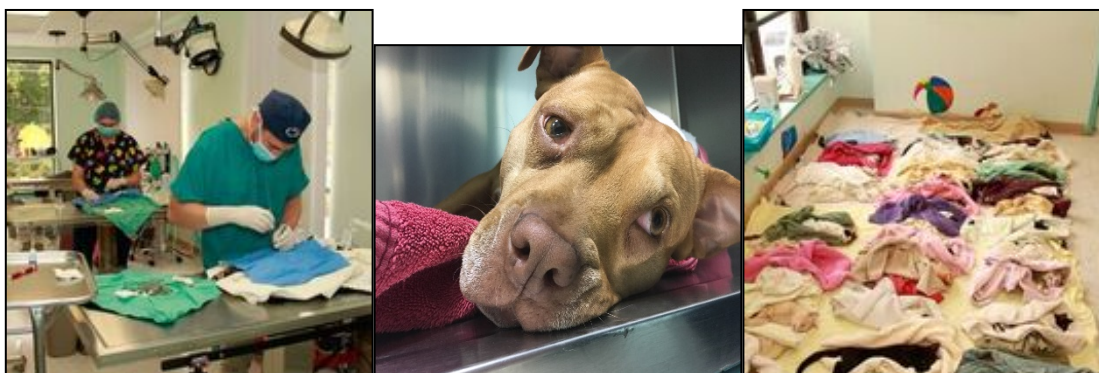
Project #  
18-405

County: Anne Arundel

Number of Cats Spayed:	399	Number of Dogs Spayed:	42
Number of Cats Neutered:	342	Number of Dogs Neutered:	36
Amount Received: \$42,873.36		Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): 0	

### Project Synopsis:

The Big Snip project was designed to provide spay / neuter services to low income families and individuals living in the Brooklyn Park zip code of 21225. This project placed a special emphasis on residents of several housing complexes that cater to low income senior citizens. The goal of the project was to spay/neuter 712 cats and 71 dogs.



### Project Description:

Rude Ranch Animal Rescue (RRAR)'s primary focus of this project was to reduce the number of homeless and unwanted animals turned into the Anne Arundel County Animal Control facility and other shelters in Anne Arundel County MD. This goal was and still is accomplished through an aggressive, targeted campaign to spay/neuter animals belonging to individuals and families in one specific targeted area /zip code of Anne Arundel County that has high owner surrender and abandonment rates and the majority of the residents are on some form of public assistance. Statistically, the higher the poverty rate in a given area, the less likely that pets will be spayed or neutered.

This grant funded the actual cost of the spay/neuter surgeries (and rabies vaccine) for the pets and a transportation component to bring the animals from the targeted neighborhood to RRAR's spay/neuter clinic (The Spay Spa & Neuter Nook) then return to the neighborhood after surgery. We planned to spay/neuter 712 cats and 71 dogs throughout 2018 - 2019 using funds from this grant. This project directly and immediately impacted Anne Arundel Animal Care and Control, as the number of nuisance and assistance calls decreased. Likewise, the intake and euthanasia rate to decreased by several percentage points. We also found BARCS (Baltimore City Animal Care) was impacted (AA County and Baltimore City share a border just outside of Brooklyn Park) as there were fewer stray and abandoned animals crossing between the two entities. Lastly, the SPCA of Anne Arundel County also benefited from this program as many residents believed taking unwanted litters of kittens and puppies to the "SPCA" will give the animals a better outcome than the county Animal Control.



Note: In the 7 years since the Spay Spa & Neuter Nook started offering low cost services, both Anne Arundel Animal Care and Control and the SPCA of Anne Arundel County intake numbers have decreased up to 8% each year. Likewise overall euthanasia numbers over the last 5 years have decreased significantly for both groups. We expect both agencies' intake numbers to continue to decrease by 2% - 4% over the next few years. "The Big Snip" was a project that focused on providing spay/neuter and vaccination services to pets belonging to low income and no income individuals and families in the Brooklyn Park, MD area. Brooklyn Park (21225) is one of the most economically challenged areas in Anne Arundel County. With a population of 14,373, the median household income is \$56,136, approximately \$20,000 below the Maryland state median income level. Unlike surrounding areas, 16.9% of residents in this area live at or below the federal poverty level. As a result, veterinary care, including spay/neuter and rabies vaccinations are out of reach for many people in this area. Likewise this area consistently is a source of many of the unaltered cats, dogs, puppies and kittens either turned into Anne Arundel Animal Care and Control or abandoned in the streets each year. "The Big Snip" will significantly expand our county's capacity to provide spay/neuter/vaccination services to this area and continue to decrease the numbers of breeding cats and dogs within neighborhoods.

.Approximately 6% of the cats (177) and 6% of the dogs (130) turned into Anne Arundel County Animal Control came from the Brooklyn Park area in 2017. Additionally, a large low-income housing complex is located in the northern portion of this zip code. Brooklyn Homes and Arundel Village houses low income/no income citizens (this complex is owned by HUD and managed by the Brooklyn Homes Tenant Council and as Section 8 housing enforces income restrictions for residents.) While it is pet friendly, all pets must be spayed or neutered before move in. In order to help many families, the management allows unaltered pets to move in with the understanding the pet will be altered. This was considered a hotspot area, as we received many calls for financial assistance regarding this complex. We estimated an additional 150 - 200 pets from these buildings/complexes need veterinary care. (We included these pets in our overall grant numbers) regarding this complex.

#### **Summary of Approach:**

"The Big Snip" was implemented in several ways:

1. Initially, Spay Spa & Neuter Nook, local Homeless Advocates/volunteers and Animal Control officers identified multiple specific areas/addresses with high surrenders and abandonment of pets, specifically litters of puppies and kittens. Some of the cats and dogs were probably originally from back alleys. Unless already living in certified low income housing, each client/address was verified as potential low income based on requests for services such as food stamps, Section 8 housing and Medicaid.
2. A weekly or bi-monthly transport for animals from these areas was established, with the advocates/volunteers getting the animals the night before. The goal was to collect as many animals as possible before the potential clients changed their mind and backed out. Additional information about the program, pick-ups and registration was distributed using flyers, posters and free publicity placed in local weekly papers. As clients called for information, appointments, financial status and location was identified and mapped out. Additional clients were qualified based on what social support services the clients used, for example food stamps, low cost housing, Medicaid, etc. Clients were instructed how to fast pets, asked about pets' health issues and told where and when pick-ups are scheduled for them. If a client was scheduled over a week out, reminder calls to clients will be made two days before surgery day.
3. The day before surgery day the RRAR van, driver and assistant(s) arrived at the location and went door to door to pick up animals. (Note: if a neighbor with an animal was near by, we sometimes took that dog or cat too) A surgery form for each animal was filled in and used to create medical records and get owners' signed consent for the surgery. Owners will be asked whether there are known health issues and whether the pet has been vaccinated for rabies. (Note: By collecting the animals the night before, we were guaranteed that animal was fasted)
4. The day after surgery, the animals were returned along with rabies/spay/neuter certificates and discharge instructions.



**Accomplishments:**

We feel we have accomplished much with this project. We spayed 399 cats and 42 dogs, neutered 342 cats and 36 dogs, more than the original estimates of 712 cats and 71 dogs. (Rude Ranch Animal Rescue provided the additional funding to accommodate these surgeries.) Many of the female cats and dogs we spayed had already had at least one litter of puppies or kittens before coming to us. Without intervention these pets would have produced many more unwanted animals.

In addition to a healthier life for the animals altered through this program, we feel that there are additional benefits: one of the most immediate outcomes was a decrease in calls for help with kittens born in neighborhoods and nuisance complaints in general. Although it is too early for to see immediate results this year, we expect to see a decrease in the numbers of unwanted litters of kittens and puppies (and accompanying mothers) turned into Anne Arundel Care And Control and surrounding shelters and rescues. As a result we expect the overall euthanasia rate to go down. Financially we also expect the costs to run Anne Arundel Care And Control and other shelters to go down: if less animals are turned in, less resources will be required to care for them. This will benefit the entire county in the long run.

**Lessons Learned:**

While we didn't have any completely unexpected issues, we were able to apply several concepts and "Lessons Learned" from previous years:

We encountered a few difficulties in terms of the surgeries we provided. Many of the animals we spayed/neutered were older, and had multiple health issues, resulting in more complicated surgeries and higher costs. Two of the dogs had large adominal tumors that needed attention. Fortunately, Rude Ranch's general veterinary fund was able to cover the additional costs for these animals. Likewise, many of the animals were not well socialized and difficult to handle. We found that additional training for our staff was necessary.

Based on experience from previous years, we expected higher than average no-show rates and also expected problems contacting and maintaining contact with clients if left on their own to get their pets to the clinic. Often, a given phone number would be disconnected the following week, making overall contact, appointment confirmations and followup very difficult. This year our approach was to go "door to door" and collect the animals on the spot the day before the surgery. This did not give the clients time to change their mind, forget, lack of transportation, etc. We also stayed in touch with the local food pantry in that area, as many of the difficult to contact clients visited the food pantry every week. The manager of the food pantry also relayed messages for us.

We did encounter one case in the senior low income complex in which the couple were running a breeding operation from their apartment. This was a difficult situation in several ways: the couple was producing multiple dogs that were being sold (unaltered); most of the dogs were not healthy (several had genetic heart defects); the couple depended on the income from selling the dogs to help pay living expenses; reporting them to the building manager would have possibly put the couple out on the streets. We resolved part of the problem through "paying" the couple to let us spay/neuter the dogs, and put them in touch with Meals on Wheels; a social worker was also brought in regarding additional programs.

**Attachments:**

final pet list.pdf



**For More Information Contact:**

**Name:**

Katherine Evans, President

**Organization Name and Address:**

Rude Ranch Animal Rescue  
Spay Spa & Neuter Nook  
1251 West Central Ave  
Davidsonville, MD 21035

**Email:** [ruderanch@comcast.net](mailto:ruderanch@comcast.net)



**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
**SPAY AND NEUTER GRANTS PROGRAM**

