



# The Big Snip!

Project #  
20-505

County: Anne Arundel

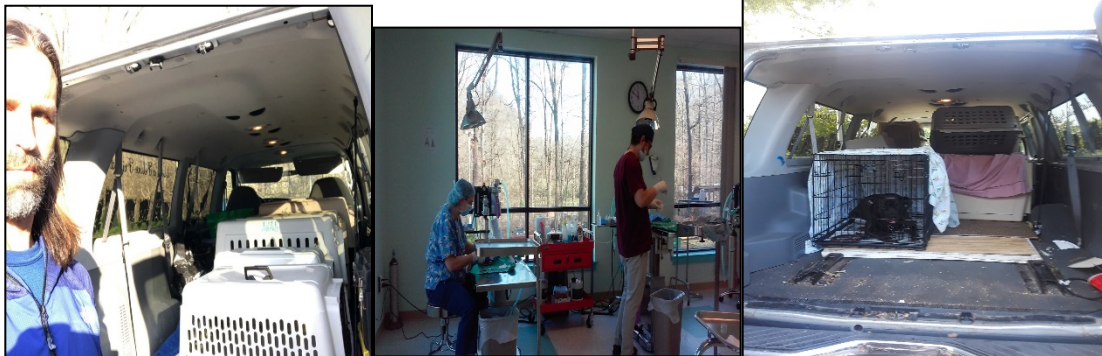
Number of Cats Spayed:	324	Number of Dogs Spayed:	33
Number of Cats Neutered:	291	Number of Dogs Neutered:	18

Amount Received: 29800	Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): 0
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### Project Synopsis:

Rude Ranch Animal Rescue (RRAR) created a project 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 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 had 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 500 cats and 50 dogs throughout 2020 using funds from this grant.



### 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 500 cats and 50 dogs throughout October 2019 - October 2020 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 8 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 Bg 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 consistantly 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. Initially, a 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)

3A. Our initial process was greatly affected by COVID-19 and quarantine/contact guidelines. Monthly transports were suspended during much of the spring. Once we were able to restart, transports were made with limited contact, including picking up cats in carriers from the front door and asking clients to load dogs into crates at the pick up site.

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 324 cats and 33 dogs, neutered 291 cats and 18 dogs, more than the original estimates of 500 cats and 50 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 in terms of implementing the grant itself. However, we did learn several things relating to COVID related fears and quarantines.

We found that many people with previous issues and fears regarding the unknown were even more fearful and mistrusting during the pandemic. It took a lot of extra time and patience to handle these clients. Other requirements for social distancing, etc added a few steps to our procedures.

We encountered a few difficulties in terms of the actual 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 abdominal 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.

### **Attachments:**

low income qtr4 (final qtr pet list)

### **For More Information Contact:**



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



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