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# Female-centric approach to dog and cat population management

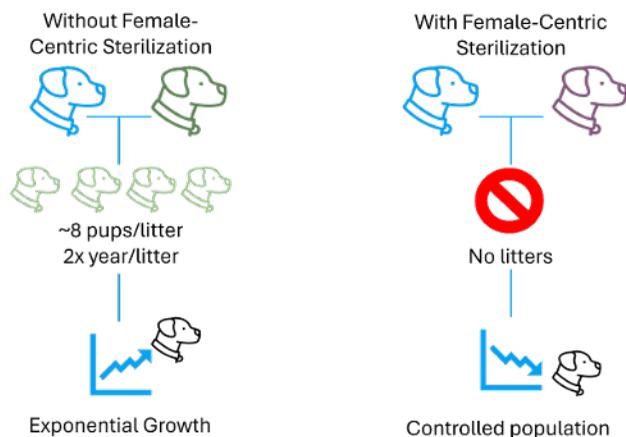
Mayur Waghela/Humane World for Animals

## What is the female-centric approach?

**Female-centric approaches** are efforts that prioritize the sterilization of female animals as the primary strategy for controlling dog/cat population growth with limited resources. This method is evidence-based on the scientific and biological fact that females are the limiting factor in reproduction; each unspayed female has the potential to produce multiple litters annually, and her offspring can reproduce within a year, compounding population growth rapidly.

## Why focus on females?

Female-centric approaches to spay and neuter initiatives are the most impactful and cost-effective strategies for addressing dog populations that exceed community management capacity and lead to welfare and public health challenges. By prioritizing the sterilization of females, programs directly interrupt the cycle of reproduction at its source, preventing the rapid growth that occurs annually. This scientific and targeted strategy ensures that each surgery delivers the maximum possible reduction in future animal populations.



## Why not the males?

Sterilizing males does not yield the same population-level impact. A single male can impregnate multiple females within a breeding season; unless the females are sterilized, population growth continues unchecked. Prioritizing females maximizes efficiency as each female sterilized eliminates multiple potential litters, resulting in faster population stabilization and measurable impact with limited resources.

## Community and welfare benefits

Female-focused sterilization programs also improve community safety and health. With fewer females in heat, there are fewer roaming and aggressive males, leading to reduced conflict, bites, and injuries. These programs can also help minimize disease transmission, such as rabies, by stabilizing populations and reducing movement of unvaccinated, migratory dogs.

### References:

Animal Welfare Board of India. 2009. Guideline for ABC program in India. p. 5.  
Yoak, A. J. et al. 2016. Optimizing free-roaming dog control programs using agent-based models. Ecological Modelling 341: 53-61.