

## **Tennessee Expands Low-Cost Spay/Neuter Program** *PetSmart Charities Grant to Match \$100,000 in Animal Friendly License Plate Funds*

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – (October 24, 2005) – Tennessee’s Animal Friendly license plates just got friendlier. PetSmart Charities is partnering with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and the Companion Animal Initiative in Tennessee (C.A.I.T.), a program of the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine, to expand low-cost spay/neuter services through its Animal Friendly specialty plates. PetSmart Charities will match up to \$100,000 of funds generated above total plate sales for the prior fiscal year.

Tennessee’s Animal Friendly license plates have been available through the Department of Agriculture since 2002. For each plate sold, \$15.50 goes to the Animal Population Control Endowment Fund. These funds are used to help non-profit organizations provide low-cost spaying/neutering of dogs and cats to help reduce the homeless pet population in Tennessee. Each year, more than 115,000 animals are euthanized in the state. Many of them lose their life simply because they do not have a loving home.

“This is the first matching grant PetSmart Charities has ever awarded for an animal friendly license plate program. Our goal is to encourage the sales of more Animal Friendly plates to increase funding for much-needed spay/neuter programs in Tennessee,” said Susana Della Maddalena, executive director of PetSmart Charities.

“The grant from PetSmart Charities is an opportunity to better serve more communities throughout the state. I encourage people who are interested in responsible pet ownership to buy the Animal Friendly license plates. This grant will essentially double the money that goes into the spay/neuter program for each plate sold,” said Dr. Ron Wilson, Tennessee’s State Veterinarian.

The Animal Friendly license plate is one of the more popular ones among Tennesseans. In the last two years, \$275,000 has been raised for low-cost spay/neuter programs, but that hasn’t met the demands. Dr. John New, professor and department head at the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine, is on the committee that reviews grant applications. “Over a half million dollars of requests were unfunded last year. If we reach the full potential of the matching gift, we’ll decrease that shortfall by more than a third. Each year, more and more quality grant proposals seeking funds for low-cost spay/neuter programs are submitted, but the money hasn’t been available. It’s very frustrating to know what good work these organizations are doing, usually on a shoestring budget, to fight the problem of too many homeless pets and not be able to fully fund them when they have the answer to the problem,” said Dr. New.

For more information about the Animal Friendly License Plate program visit [Tennessee.gov/agriculture](http://Tennessee.gov/agriculture) then click “Animal Health,” or to purchase a plate contact your local county clerk’s office. The specialty plate costs \$35 in addition to county fees.

### **About PetSmart Charities**

PetSmart Charities ([www.petsmartcharities.org](http://www.petsmartcharities.org)) creates and supports programs that save the lives of homeless pets, raise awareness of companion animal welfare issues, and promote healthy relationships between people and pets. Since 1994, PetSmart Charities, an independent 501(c)3 organization, has donated more than \$39 million to animal welfare programs and, through its in-store adoption programs, has saved the lives of more than 2 million pets.

### **About C.A.I.T.**

C.A.I.T. ([www.vet.utk.edu/cait](http://www.vet.utk.edu/cait)), a program of the UT College of Veterinary Medicine, is dedicated to end Tennessee’s surplus of homeless dogs and cats by taking a proactive approach. C.A.I.T. promotes humane education throughout the state, thus improving the lives of companion animals.

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