



## **I-INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF ANIMAL SCIENCE IN SEMI-ARID REGIONS**

*Universidade Federal do Agreste de Pernambuco – UFAPE*  
July 03<sup>rd</sup> to 05<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Garanhuns-PE

Field of work: Pets

### **Education and Awareness Raising on Responsible Guardianship and Neutering: Results of a Study with Animal Guardians at the UFAPE Veterinary Hospital**

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"Responsible pet ownership" refers to the principles that human beings should adopt regarding the animals under their care, taking full responsibility for their care and well-being. Neutering can often be a fundamental element for the well-being and health of pets, as well as for population control and public health. However, a lack of knowledge among pet owners can result in inadequate care and breeding practices, leading to problems such as abandonment, overpopulation and zoonotic diseases. Queens and bitches are animals with short pregnancies of approximately 60 days, large litter, and early sexual maturation. Their reproductive characteristics, combined with the recklessness of their owners, contribute to the high population density of stray animals. In this context, surgical neutering is a permanent contraceptive method for birth control and also as a means of preventing reproductive diseases, such as venereal, uterine infection and breast tumors in females, and some prostate diseases in males. In order to contribute to the promotion of responsible animal care practices in Garanhuns/PE, this study aimed to assess the level of awareness of pet owners about responsible pet ownership and neutering, highlighting the importance of outreach projects and educational interventions. Questionnaires were applied to pet owners through daily activities carried out by veterinary medicine undergraduates in 2022 at the Veterinary Hospital of the Universidade Federal do Agreste de Pernambuco (UFAPE). A total of 79 questionnaires were answered voluntarily. The data collected was expressed as a percentage and statistically analyzed using Pearson's chi-squared test, using an alpha value of 0.05. The analysis was implemented using the free software R 4.2.2. As a result, 72.15% (57/79) of the interviewees were female, 56.97% (45/79) said they did not know the term "responsible guardianship", demonstrating a significant gap in knowledge on the subject. With regard to the number of animals under the guardianship of the participants, there were a total of 240 animals, the majority of which were male cats (28.75%) and female dogs (25.84%). Of these, 35.41% (85/240) were neutered, mostly male cats (44/85). The main reason for neutering was therapeutic for reproductive diseases, accounting for 41.19% of the responses. Considering the low rate of surgical sterilization, most of which is carried out as a therapeutic measure, extension projects aimed at raising awareness among owners about the results of neutering as a prophylactic measure against reproductive diseases are essential. In addition, it is important to clarify the concept of responsible pet ownership, since a lack of understanding of this term can result in damage to the well-being of pets.

**Keywords: Outreach projects, Welfare, animal population control**

Financial support: PIBEX- PREC/UFAPE

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