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## Emma's Story



Sometimes, the road to a better life is filled with unexpected twists, and the need for a helping hand can arise at any moment. This is the story of a woman—let's call her *Emma*—who found herself stranded in Houston, alone with her three beloved dogs and nowhere to turn.

Originally from San Antonio, *Emma* moved to Houston to live with a man she had been dating. She brought her three dogs with her, believing that her life was taking a positive turn. However, after some time, personal issues with her boyfriend and his family arose. Despite her efforts to make it work, she found herself in an unbearable situation. Eventually, *Emma* was forced to leave.

You can help!

With no family or friends in the Houston area to lean on, *Emma* rented a motel room for herself and her dogs. She hoped she would be able to regroup and figure out a plan, but things continued to spiral. Just before she left her boyfriend, her car had been towed, and with no employment yet and limited funds, she had no way to pay to get it back. *Emma* was left with no vehicle and only a few dollars in her pocket after paying for their room. She reached out to local human shelters, but none would allow her to bring her dogs along. *Emma* was literally trapped in an unfamiliar city, unable to leave, and struggling to keep herself and her dogs off the streets.

*Emma* knew abandoning her dogs was not an option. In desperation, she reached out to Texas Litter Control's *Help Me Keep My Pet* (HMKMP) program. Our team immediately began working to find a local foster for her three dogs. But with time running out and the threat of losing her hotel room looming, it became clear we needed to act fast.

Recognizing that she had more support in San Antonio, *Emma* and the team decided the best option was to help her and her dogs get back to where she could receive the resources she needed. We quickly arranged transportation, and one of our team members drove *Emma*, her dogs, and all the belongings they could fit into the truck back to San Antonio.

Soon after arriving, *Emma* surprised us all when she learned she was pregnant. This added yet another layer of urgency to her situation—her struggles were not only her own, but now included the well-being of a new life. Through this intervention, Texas Litter Control prevented five lives from suffering on the streets: *Emma* and her three dogs, along with her unborn child.

Back in San Antonio, *Emma* was able to reconnect with her support system. She re-enrolled in a temp-staffing program she had previously been a part of, and with the help of local resources, she began to rebuild her life. *Emma* and her family are safe now, thanks to the compassionate intervention of Texas Litter Control and the *Help Me Keep My Pet* program.

This story highlights not only the importance of helping pet owners in crisis but also the power of community support. Without the assistance provided by Texas Litter Control, *Emma* and her family would likely have faced even more hardship and may have ultimately been torn apart. But with a little help, they are now on the path to a brighter future.

Texas Litter Control's HMKMP team is committed to keeping pets in their homes, out of shelters, and off the streets. The purpose of the *Help Me Keep My Pet* program is to offer assistance to those facing difficult circumstances, ensuring that people like *Emma* have the resources necessary to overcome adversity and keep their pets by their side.

Your support can make a difference—join us in helping more families stay together.

Donate, volunteer, or share new or gently-used pet supplies! Visit [texaslittercontrol.org](https://texaslittercontrol.org) for more information. And if you or someone you know is in need of pet-related assistance, visit [helpmekeepmypet.com](https://helpmekeepmypet.com).

Together, we can help families find hope in times of crisis.

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## Health Benefits of Early Spay/Neuter

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Spaying or neutering pets is one of the most responsible decisions a pet owner can make. While the procedure—surgically removing the reproductive organs of dogs and cats—is often associated with population control, its benefits extend far beyond preventing unwanted litters.

Early spay/neuter, typically performed before the animal reaches sexual maturity (around 4-6 months of age), offers a range of health, behavioral, and societal advantages.

Below, we explore why this practice is widely recommended by veterinarians and animal welfare advocates.

**Health Benefits** - One of the most compelling reasons to spay or neuter pets early is the significant health improvements it can provide. For female dogs and cats, spaying eliminates the risk of uterine infections, such as pyometra, a potentially life-threatening condition. It also drastically reduces the likelihood of mammary gland tumors, which are malignant in about 50% of dogs and 90% of cats. Studies have shown that spaying before the first heat cycle (which can occur as early as 5-6 months) can reduce this cancer risk by up to 99%.

For males, neutering eliminates the risk of testicular cancer and lowers the incidence of prostate problems, including infections and enlargement, which are common in intact dogs as they age. Additionally, removing the reproductive hormones that drive mating behaviors can reduce stress on the body, potentially leading to a longer, healthier life.

**Behavioral Advantages** - Unspayed or unneutered animals often exhibit behaviors tied to their reproductive instincts, which can be challenging for pet owners. Male dogs and cats may become more aggressive, mark their territory with urine, or attempt to roam in search of a mate—sometimes leading to fights or injuries. Females in heat can attract unwanted attention from roaming males, become restless, or vocalize excessively.

Early spay/neuter helps curb these instincts before they fully develop. Neutered males are less likely to exhibit dominance-related aggression or engage in marking behaviors, while spayed females avoid the stress and mess of heat cycles. This results in pets that are generally calmer, more focused on their human families, and easier to train.

**Population Control and Community Impact** - Every year, millions of dogs and cats end up in shelters, with many being euthanized due to overcrowding. Early spay/neuter plays a critical role in reducing pet overpopulation by preventing unplanned litters. A single unspayed female cat, for example, can produce multiple litters per year, and her offspring can begin reproducing within months, leading to an exponential increase in homeless animals. Dogs, while less prolific, also contribute to the problem when left intact.

By spaying or neutering pets early, owners help break this cycle, easing the burden on shelters and reducing the number of animals living on the streets. This not only benefits the community but also ensures fewer animals suffer from neglect, starvation, or abandonment.

**Addressing Common Concerns** - Some pet owners hesitate to spay or neuter early, citing concerns about growth, weight gain, or personality changes. While it's true that spaying/neutering alters metabolism slightly (potentially increasing the risk of obesity if diet and exercise aren't managed), these issues are easily preventable with proper care. As for growth, modern research indicates that early spay/neuter does not significantly affect skeletal development in most breeds, though consulting a veterinarian about timing is wise, especially for large-breed dogs.

Personality-wise, spaying or neutering doesn't "dull" a pet's spirit. It simply reduces hormone-driven behaviors, leaving their unique traits—like playfulness or loyalty—intact.

**Timing Matters** - Veterinarians generally recommend spaying or neutering pets between 4 and 6 months of age, before their first heat or full sexual maturity. This timing maximizes health benefits and minimizes behavioral challenges. However, advances in veterinary medicine have made the procedure safe even for younger animals (as early as 8 weeks in some cases), particularly in shelter settings where population control is urgent.

**A Win for Pets and People** - Early spay/neuter is a simple, one-time investment that pays off in a lifetime of benefits. Healthier pets live longer, happier lives with fewer medical complications. Calmer, better-behaved animals strengthen the bond between pets and their owners. And by preventing overpopulation, we collectively create a more humane world for all animals.

If you're a pet owner, talk to your veterinarian about the best time to spay or neuter your dog or cat. It's a small step that makes a big difference—for your pet, your home, and your community.

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## You Can Help Us Make More Miracles Happen

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Today, the mission of *Help Me Keep My Pet* is more important than ever. So many families like Ebony's are facing tough times, and TLC is here to assist them in navigating their challenges. But we need your help to continue our vital work.



### Get Involved Today:

**Donate:** Every dollar helps us provide life-saving support to families in need.

**Volunteer:** Your time and skills can make a real difference in the lives of these families. Ask us how you can help.

**Share:** Spread the word about *Help Me Keep My Pet* so more families know we are here for them.

Join us in giving families like Ebony's the gift of togetherness in this new year. Together, we can keep pets out of the shelters, off the streets, and in their homes with their families—where they belong.

**DONATE**

Thank you for your continued support of Texas Litter Control and *Help Me Keep My Pet*.

Visit [TexasLitterControl.org](http://TexasLitterControl.org) and [HelpMeKeepMyPet.com](http://HelpMeKeepMyPet.com) to learn more and get involved.

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**



You Can Help Us Make More Miracles Happen

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