

MEDIA RELEASE

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Matawa Animal Wellness Services kicks off 10-day spay/neuter marathon in remote First Nations on National Day of Truth and Reconciliation

Thunder Bay, ON – Matawa Animal Wellness Services is marking an historic milestone with a series of three community-led spay/neuter and vaccination clinics taking place from September 30 to October 9, 2025, in Neskantaga, Nibinamik, and Marten Falls First Nations.

The clinics will be led by Matawa First Nations and conducted by Matawa Animal Wellness Services in partnership with a six-person veterinary team from the Toronto Humane Society. The clinics begin on September 30, 2025, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, highlighting the value of supportive and culturally informed partnerships to address the longstanding inequity in animal wellness services in northern communities.

“This partnership shows what reconciliation in action looks like,” said Judi Cannon, Indigenous animal wellness specialist with Matawa Animal Wellness Services. “For too long, Matawa’s remote communities have gone without veterinary care, but the First Nations – with support from Toronto Humane Society – are guiding this work to protect their animals, their people, and their lands, while honouring cultural traditions that teach us animals are kin.”

“What makes this effort powerful is that it’s the communities themselves who are leading the way,” said Phil Nichols, CEO of Toronto Humane Society, “Our role is to listen, support, and walk alongside them as they build sustainable systems of care for their animals and families.”

Thanks to critical funding from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), Matawa communities can now provide sustained veterinary care that protects both pets and people. After this clinic series, one participating community aims to have 90% of its dog population spayed or neutered and vaccinated, a benchmark that will help regulate the dog population, reduce roaming dogs and dog bites, and strengthen [protection against zoonotic diseases like rabies](#).

More than 200 pets are expected to be treated across the three sites, representing a major shift for Matawa’s remote northern communities, some of which have not received veterinary care in over a decade. By the end of the year, all nine Matawa member First Nations will have held animal wellness clinics with support from Matawa Animal Wellness Services and its veterinarian partners.

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For more information, please contact Judi Cannon, Indigenous Animal Wellness Specialist with Matawa’s Animal Wellness Services, at jcannon@matawa.on.ca.

