

No Kill Sheltering

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A Publication of the No Kill Advocacy Center

THIS ISSUE: BUILDING A NO KILL COMMUNITY

A photograph of two dogs silhouetted against a bright sunset. The dog on the left is a long-haired breed, possibly a Shetland Sheepdog, and the dog on the right is a black and white speckled breed, possibly a Border Collie. They are both looking towards the right. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong backlight effect.

INCLUDING: The No Kill Equation

From California to New York, the No Kill equation proves successful

Misinterpreting the San Francisco Model

Why programs and services - and not collaboration - are the real lessons from San Francisco's success

A No Kill Nation Is Within Our Reach

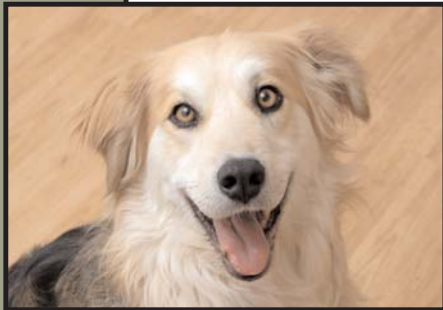
A National Tragedy

This year, roughly 5,000,000 dogs and cats will be put to death in our nation's animal shelters. Their only "crime" is that they have no human address. Others may be sick or injured, but they could be saved with little effort. Unfortunately, they, too, will be killed. And still others are feral cats who should never enter shelters in the first place. But there is another way.



A Reason for Hope

In the last decade, several progressive communities have put into place a bold series of lifesaving programs and services which have dramatically reduced the death rate in those communities. Their success proves that there is a formula for lifesaving, and that if we are to achieve a No Kill nation, it is incumbent upon shelters nationwide to embrace the programs and services which have been proven to save lives.



The No Kill Advocacy Center is the nation's first organization dedicated solely to the promotion of a No Kill nation. And it is the only national animal welfare agency that is staffed by people who have actually worked in and created a No Kill community.

Join the Crusade

But the challenges we face are great. From entrenched bureaucrats who are content with the status quo, to uncaring shelter directors hostile to calls for reform; from agencies mired in the failed philosophies of the past to those who have internalized a culture of defeatism—the roadblocks to No Kill are substantial, but not insurmountable.

We have a choice. We can fully, completely and without reservation embrace No Kill as our future. Or we can continue to legitimize the two-prong strategy of failure: adopt a few and kill the rest. It is a choice which history has thrown upon us. And a challenge that the No Kill Advocacy Center is ready to take on.

Your tax deductible contribution will help us hasten the day when animals find in their shelter a new beginning—instead of the end of the line. Working together, we can build an alternative consensus to traditional sheltering models—one which is oriented toward promoting and preserving life. An alternative which seeks to create a future where every animal will be respected and cherished, and where every individual life will be protected and revered.



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A No Kill nation is within our reach.

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Upcoming Issues

Revamping Your “Euthanasia” Policy
The Ideal Animal Control Director
A Model Feral Cat Policy for Municipal Shelters

Misinterpreting the San Francisco Model

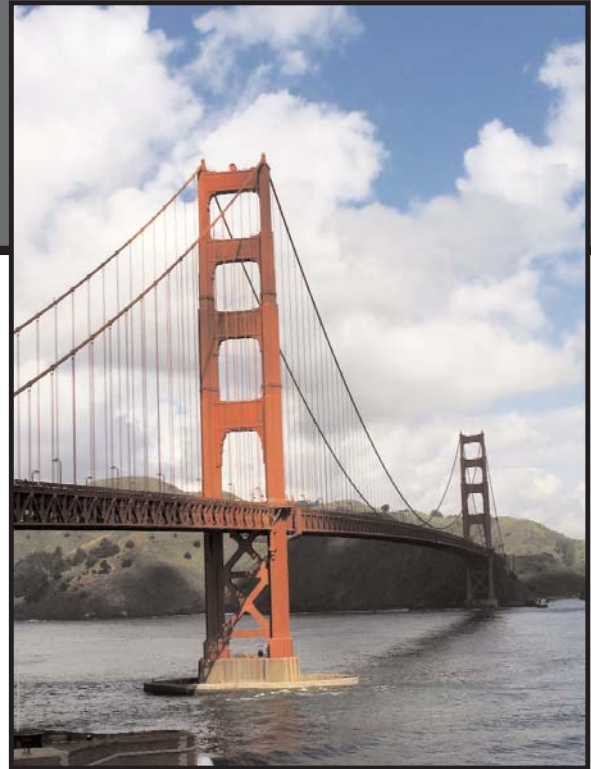
Why programs and services
~ *and not collaboration* ~
are the real lessons from
San Francisco's success.

The buzzword in sheltering today is “collaboration.” Activists who are tired of the killing in their communities are trying to get all parties to the table to agree on a joint campaign for change. These efforts are promoted and encouraged by many funding agencies, including some of the largest foundations in the country.

Collaboration is being promoted because these agencies are looking to the city of San Francisco as a roadmap to saving lives. In 1994, the city and county of San Francisco became the first community in the nation to end the killing of healthy dogs and cats in its animal shelter system. An agreement between the city's Animal Care and Control Department and the private San Francisco SPCA ensured a home not only to each and every healthy dog and cat, but to thousands who were sick or injured but treatable. In addition, a citywide preference for neutering over impounding and killing also reduced the death rate for feral cats by 73% and for underaged kittens by 81%.

By the year 2000, roughly 74% of all dogs and cats (nearly three out of four) were being released alive, either back to their owners or to new homes. This achievement was over twice that of any other major urban city and approximately three times the national average. This year, San Francisco expects that over 80% of all impounded dogs and cats will go home alive.

Unfortunately, most people misunderstand the San Francisco model, or offer various excuses for their inability to replicate its success. While



shelters continue to kill large numbers of animals in the face of lifesaving alternatives, the primary reason for the failure for those who have desired to emulate “the San Francisco model” is the fundamental misinterpretation of what actually allowed San Francisco to succeed in its efforts. And it was not - as many people have been led to believe - a collaboration between the San Francisco SPCA and the San Francisco Animal Care and Control Department.

Most agencies mistakenly assume that No Kill is not possible without a large private shelter subsidizing the work of a municipal animal control agency. This view has even been adopted by former administrators of the San Francisco SPCA. They focus on the “partnership” aspect between the private SPCA and the public pound. As such, they tend to emphasize collaboration at the expense of programs, even though it is actually the latter

which accounted for San Francisco's success.

Collaboration is Not Always Key

This is also the primary reason why national foundations who fund such partnerships are not achieving their desired success. To them, collaboration is not just an important piece of the puzzle, it is the only piece. That is why a focus on collaboration at the expense of programs is a recipe for failure—as the fiasco of the “Asilomar Accords” aptly demonstrates. These Accords are an agreement endorsed by many national organizations including the Humane Society of the United States. And while the Accords focus on building collaborations, they allow shelters to work actively against No Kill by killing rather than sterilizing feral cats, keeping volunteers out of the shelter, and using temperament testing to unfairly label dogs “unadoptable.” In fact, none of the programs that made San Francisco successful are endorsed by the Accords. In some cases—like TNR for feral cats—these were actually voted down. In the end, all are left to “local decisionmaking” which can and often means opposition and continued killing.

While the job is certainly made easier if all parties are willing to work together, collaboration only works when animal control or private shelters are dedicated to the No Kill endeavor. If they are not, a focus on collaboration can actually delay lifesaving efforts or even doom them altogether. In such cases, the effort at coalition building detracts from the real impediment to saving lives: reforming the animal shelter or regime change within those agencies that continue to cling to outdated models of sheltering.

In fact, to call what occurred in San Francisco a partnership is to elevate form above substance. The San Francisco city shelter was hardly a willing

participant, and had to be brought to the table by threats of public initiative and external pressure. And, in the end, it never fully embraced the paradigm, choosing to expend its energy on efforts to downplay the success of San Francisco and belittle No Kill achievements.

And while the large national organizations continue to push the idea that all humane societies and animal control agencies are interested in the same goals, the facts frequently tell a different story—one of intransigent, reactionary policies that cause animals to needlessly die even in the face of lifesaving alternatives as demonstrated by No Kill success in progressive communities nationwide.

While the job is certainly made easier if all parties are willing to work together, collaboration only works when animal control or private shelters are dedicated to the No Kill endeavor. If they are not, a focus on collaboration can actually delay lifesaving efforts or even doom them altogether.

Programs and services such as Trap-Neuter-Return for feral cats, foster care for sick, injured, unweaned or traumatized animals, and working with rescue groups.

The focus on collaboration at the expense of reforming animal control agencies who are not implementing those programs is a recipe for continued killing. Indeed, the success of San Francisco was a two-part strategy that has been largely ignored, and is not

reliant on a private SPCA or humane society or willing collaboration.

That strategy involves: Reducing the intake of homeless dogs and cats through various programs, but most notably through spaying and neutering initiatives; and, Implementing a series of programmatic initiatives for animals already impounded.

Reducing Intakes

The first prong of the model involves responsibly reducing impounds so that more

resources can be used to provide care for individual animals. Fewer animals impounded also mean less strain on foster homes, cage and kennel space, volunteer and staff attention, and other overall efforts to save lives.

This was accomplished, in part, through a series of pet retention programs that helped owners overcome behavioral, medical, and environmental obstacles to keeping their pets. But, in the final analysis, the primary mechanism for reducing impounds involved subsidizing the cost of spay/neuter for the community's low income pet owners, for targeted human demographics (e.g., the homeless, the poor, the elderly) and for targeted pet populations (e.g., feral cats and pit bulls). The success of this approach cannot be overstated. In the 1980s, San Francisco impounded over 20,000 dogs and cats per year. By 2005, that number was just over 7,000, despite community population growth to 800,000 human residents. In comparative terms, that is less than one dog or cat for every 1,000 human residents. The national average is about 15 dogs and cats for every 1,000 human residents. And many communities have intake rates more than two times that average. In short, a commitment to high volume low-cost public spay/neuter has resulted in an intake rate over 30 times lower per capita in San Francisco than many communities. This strategy does not depend on whether the agency is public or private.

Increasing Lifesaving

The second prong involved shifting from a reactive and traditional public health orientation to a proactive and community based adoption and rescue agency. In other words, animal control must place much more emphasis on its animal "care" functions and balance it with its animal "control" duties. By asserting a unique identity, having autonomy in its

operations distinct from those of a health department or police agency, and by putting itself on more equal footing in scope and service with private animal welfare organizations, animal control can save more lives.

In San Francisco, this involved putting in place programs and services that had a measurable lifesaving impact, rather than basing shelter responses on tradition or longstanding public health model practices. These included a volunteer and foster care program, offsite adoption programs and others.



Exporting the Model

In 2001, this model was exported to Tompkins County, NY where it was implemented at a shelter that served as the animal control authority for the county. The agency took in all dogs and cats (including vicious and feral animals), and was staffed with New York State peace officers charged with enforcing local animal

control ordinances and State anti-cruelty laws.

The combination of subsidized spay/neuter for pets of low-income owners, feral cat, and pit bull populations, combined with proactive community based programs also allowed Tompkins County, NY to realize reduced impounds of key populations, as well as a corresponding increase in lifesaving rates. These efforts resulted in a dramatic 75% decline in the shelter death rate in a period of three years.

In 2005, the animal control authority for the City of Philadelphia endorsed and took measures consistent with the "San Francisco model" and also realized its benefits. After an implementation and transition phase, this has resulted in a better than 30% decline in shelter killing in only eight months—a five year average for most communities. Prior to implementation, the shelter was killing roughly 88% of all impounded animals. In Charlottesville, the local SPCA and animal control authority saved almost 7 out of 10 cats and 9 out of 10 dogs last year

using the same model. In other words, a focus on programs trumps a need for collaboration, although the latter can reduce the timeframe of success. (This should not be mistaken with rescue groups and feral cat organizations. Working with these groups is key to lifesaving success.)

Nonetheless, any model that reverses them—that elevates collaboration over programs as the Asilomar Accords and some foundation strategies do—will fail, as aptly demonstrated in the last few years of several nationwide No Kill attempts and coalitions that were long on promise and short on results.

The success of San Francisco, Tompkins County, and increasingly Philadelphia and Charlottesville, VA show the efficacy of the programs approach. In short, the model works. If implemented with rigor, any community can and

will achieve No Kill, regardless of outside funding or the existence of a broad-based coalition involving all agencies in the community.

To the extent a shelter isn't implementing this model, animals are needlessly being killed. And because No Kill advocates must represent the interests of the animals, they must first demand these programs, and then fight for them. The first step to success is often the hardest one of all—a hard working, compassionate animal control or shelter director not content to regurgitate tired clichés or hide behind the myth of “too many animals, not enough homes.”

Unfortunately, this one is also oftentimes the hardest one to demand and find. But find him or her we must. Because the public wants No Kill, the animals deserve it and if it requires regime change to get it, we must fight for that too.

Top 10 Strategies for Saving Lives

1 Ignore Conventional Wisdom

Advice that comes from the old-guard organizations is often mired in the past and not terribly effective. Look around, stay flexible, think creatively, and act boldly—even if it is not on the “approved” list of big-shelter practices.

2 Where There's a Will

No Kill begins and ends as an act of will. Do not ever accept that killing is a legitimate and appropriate “solution” to homeless pets. Stay focused, work hard, make sure there is a direct, lifesaving effect with the programs you implement. You'll get results.

3 Know Thyself

How many animals coming into the shelter are neonatal kittens and puppies? How many are dogs with behavior problems? How many are sick? What types of injuries are most common? Different problems need different solutions.

4 Free to Good Shelter

Volunteers are the lifeblood of any organization, providing endless enthusiasm, hard work, and TLC for the animals no shelter could afford to pay for or be without.

5 There Goes the Neighborhood

If people can't or won't come to the shelter, take the shelter to them. Conduct off-site adoptions at every community event or simply set up shop at corner malls, stores, and neighborhoods.

6 In Foster Parents We Trust

If you trust them enough to bottle-feed baby kittens for four weeks around the clock, trust them to adopt or find homes for them on your behalf.

7 Yes, We're Open

Staying open after 5 pm on weekdays and all day Saturday and Sunday to give working people a chance to reclaim lost pets or adopt new ones doesn't necessarily mean more hours, just different ones.

8 Hear ye, Hear Ye

Spread the word! Having an offsite adoption? Saved the life of an injured pet? Get those press releases out! Staying in the public eye raises awareness, increases the number of homes, and brings in donations.

9 Do As I Do

Shelters should not add to their problems or kill the offspring of pets they themselves adopt out by placing breedable animals in the community.

10 Ask for Help

Ask, ask, and ask for help—for money, for volunteers, for homes, for rescue groups, for foster parents. Speak to community groups and ask them to support your lifesaving work by opening their hearts, homes, and wallets to needy animals.

medical and behavioral rehab + public relations + community involvement
+ rescue groups + TNR
accountability + compassionate care

The No Kill

Two decades ago, the concept of a No Kill community was little more than a dream. Today the humane movement is poised to make it a reality—to meet the challenge of building a truly humane society. And the first step is a decision, a commitment to reject killing as the primary shelter population management tool. No Kill starts as an act of will. The next step involves putting in place the infrastructure to save lives.

Following a commitment to No Kill is the need for accountability. Accountability means having clear definitions, a lifesaving plan, and charting successes and failures. Clear protocols should be established, and staff properly trained to ensure that each and every animal is given a fair evaluation and a chance for placement or treatment. But accountability also allows, indeed requires, flexibility. Too many shelters lose sight of this principle, staying rigid with shelter protocols, believing these are engraved in stone. They are not. Protocols are important because they ensure accountability from staff. But protocols without flexibility can have the opposite effect: stifling innovation, causing lives to be needlessly lost, and allowing shelter employees who fail to save lives to hide behind a paper trail. The decision to end an animal's life is an extremely serious one, and should always be treated as such. No matter how many animals a shelter kills, each and every animal is an

individual, and each deserves individual consideration.

And finally, to meet the challenge that No Kill entails, shelter leadership needs to get the community excited, to energize people for the task at hand. By working with people, implementing lifesaving programs, and treating each life as precious, a shelter can transform a community.

The mandatory programs and services include:

I. Feral Cat TNR Program

Many animal control agencies in communities throughout the United States are embracing Trap, Neuter, Return programs (TNR) to improve animal welfare, reduce death rates, and meet obligations to public welfare and neighborhood tranquility demanded by governments. In San Francisco, for example, the program was very successful, resulting in less impounds, less killing and reduced public complaints. In Tompkins County, an agreement with county officials and the rabies control division of the health department provided for TNR as an acceptable complaint, nuisance and rabies abatement procedure. In specific cases, the health department paid the Tompkins County SPCA to perform TNR.

community + high volume, low-cost spay-neuter
ment + volunteers + foster
director + pet retention + care +

11 Equation

II. High-Volume, Low-Cost Spay/Neuter

Spay/neuter is the cornerstone of a successful lifesaving effort. Low cost, high volume spay/neuter will quickly lead to fewer animals entering the shelter system, allowing more resources to be allocated toward saving lives.

In the 1970s, the City of Los Angeles was the first to provide municipally funded spaying and neutering for low-income pet owners in the United States. A city study found that for every dollar it was investing in the program, Los Angeles taxpayers were saving \$10 in animal control costs due to reductions in animal intakes and fewer field calls. Indeed, Los Angeles shelters were taking in half the number of animals after just the first decade of the program and killing rates in the city dropped to the lowest third per capita in the United States. This result is consistent with results in San Francisco and elsewhere.



Research shows that investment in programs balancing animal “care” and “control” can provide not only immediate public health and public relations benefits but also long-term financial savings to a jurisdiction. According to the International City/County Management Association,

An effective animal control program not only saves cities and counties on present costs—by protecting citizens from dangerous dogs, for example—but also helps reduce the costs of animal control in the future. A city that impounds and euthanizes 4,000 animals in 2001... but does not promote spaying

and neutering will probably still euthanize at least 4,000 animals a year in 2010. A city that... [institutes a subsidized spay/neuter program] will likely euthanize significantly fewer animals in 2010 and save on a host of other animal-related costs as well.

III. Rescue Groups

An adoption or transfer to a rescue group frees up scarce cage and kennel space, reduces expenses for feeding, cleaning, killing and carcass disposal, and improves a community's rate of lifesaving. Getting an animal out of the shelter and into an appropriate placement is important and rescue groups, as a general rule, can screen adopters as well or better than many shelters. In an environment of 5,000,000 dogs and cats killed in shelters annually, there will rarely be a shortage of adoptable animals and if a rescue group is willing to take custody and care of the animal, rare is the circumstance in which they should be denied.

IV. Foster Care

Foster care is crucial to No Kill. Without it, saving lives is compromised. It is a low cost, and often no cost, way of increasing a shelter's capacity, improving public relations, increasing a shelter's public image, rehabilitating sick and injured or behaviorally challenged animals, and saving lives.

At some point in time, nearly every animal shelter feels the pinch of not having enough space. A volunteer foster program can be an ideal low-cost way to greatly increase the number of lives a shelter can save while at the same time providing an opportunity for community members to volunteer. Not only does a foster program maximize the number of animals rescued, it allows an organization to care for animals who would be difficult to care for in a shelter environment— orphaned or feral kittens, sick or injured animals, or dogs needing one-on-one behavior rehabilitation. For animals who may need a break from the shelter environment, foster care provides a comfortable home setting that keeps animals happy and healthy.

V. Comprehensive Adoption Programs

Adoptions are vital to an agency's lifesaving

mission. The quantity and quality of shelter adoptions is in shelter management's hands, making lifesaving a direct function of shelter policies and practice.

As one commentator put it, "if each pet lives 10 years, on average, and the number of homes grows at the same rate that homes are lost through deaths and other attrition, then replacement homes would become available each year for more than twice as many dogs and slightly more cats than enter shelters. Since the inventory of pet-owning homes is growing, not just holding even, adoption could in theory replace all population control killing right now—if the animals and potential adopters were better introduced."

Shelter killing is more a function of shelter practices, than 'public irresponsibility.'

In fact, studies show people get their dogs from shelters only 15% of the time overall, and less than 10% of the time for cats. If shelters better promoted their animals and had adoption programs responsive to the needs of the community, they could increase the number of homes

available and replace population control killing with adoptions. In other words, shelter killing is more a function of market share, than "public irresponsibility." Contrary to conventional wisdom, shelters can adopt their way out of killing.

VI. Pet Retention

While some of the reasons animals are surrendered to shelters are unavoidable, others can be prevented—but only if shelters are willing to work with people to help them solve their problems. Saving all healthy and treatable pets requires communities to develop innovative strategies for keeping people and their companion animals together. And the more a community sees its shelter(s) as a place to turn for advice and assistance, the easier this job will be.

Animal control agencies can maintain “libraries” of pet care and behavior fact sheets in the shelter and on a website. Articles in local papers, radio and television spots all provide opportunities to feature topics like solving litterbox avoidance and excessive barking. Other pet retention programs include free in-home dog behavior problem-solving by volunteers, low-cost dog training, pet friendly rental programs, dog walker referrals, and pet behavior classes.

VII. Medical and Behavior Rehabilitation

A shelter begins helping treatable animals by closely analyzing statistics. How many animals entering a shelter are treatable? What types of injuries and illnesses are most common? The answers to these questions will determine what types of rehabilitation programs are needed and how to effectively allocate resources. For example, one community may have many underage kittens in its shelters. Another may have substantial numbers of cats with upper respiratory infections, or dogs with kennel cough. Yet another may find that a large portion of treatables are dogs with behavior problems. Each will need a different lifesaving program.

These can include creating a fund dedicated solely to medical and behavioral rehabilitation. Such a fund lets the public direct their donations and allows a shelter to demonstrate what they are doing to help treatables. In addition, the shelter can establish relationships to have local veterinarians come to the shelter to do rotations. These veterinarians can supplement the work of a staff veterinarian and veterinary technicians and help diagnose animals, give vaccinations, and administer medication and treatment.

A relationship with a veterinary college can allow veterinary students to volunteer at the shelter on a regular basis, providing the students with real life on-the-job training, while shelter animals receive high-quality care under the direction of the veterinary college faculty. Finally, it is impossible to

overstate the importance of a foster program for underaged kittens and puppies, undersocialized animals, and those recovering from medical treatment.

VIII. Public Relations/Community Involvement

Rebuilding a relationship with the community starts with redefining oneself as a “pet rescue” agency. The community must see improvement at the shelter, and improvements in the area of lifesaving. Public contact with the agency must include good customer service, more adoptions, and tangible commitments to give the shelter the tools it needs to do the job humanely. Public contact, however, is not necessarily a face-to-face encounter. The public has contact with an agency by reading about it in the newspaper, seeing volunteers adopting animals at a local shopping mall, or hearing the Executive Director promoting spay/neuter on the radio. It means public relations and community education.

The importance of good public relations cannot be overstated. Good, consistent public relations are the key to getting more money, more volunteers, more adoptions, and more community goodwill. Indeed, if lifesaving is considered the destination, public relations are the vehicle which will get a shelter there. Without it, the shelter will always be struggling with animals, finances, and community recognition.



Increasing adoptions, maximizing donations, recruiting volunteers and partnering with community agencies comes down to one thing: increasing the shelter's exposure. And that means consistent marketing and public relations. Public relations and marketing are the foundation of all a shelter's activities and their success. To do all these things well, the shelter must be in the public eye.

Indeed, a survey of more than 200 animal control agencies, conducted by a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania College of Veterinary Medicine, found that "community engagement" was one of the key factors in those agencies who have managed to reduce killing and increase lifesaving. One agency noted that "public buy-in is crucial for long-term improvements" placing primary importance on "the need to view community outreach and public engagement as integral to the agency's overall purpose and programs rather than simply as an add-on accomplished with a few public service announcements..."

IX. Volunteers

Volunteers are a dedicated "army of compassion" and the backbone of a successful No Kill effort. There is never enough staff, never enough dollars to hire more staff, and always more needs than paid human resources. That is where volunteers come in and make the difference between success and failure and, for the animals, life and death.

In San Francisco, a community of approximately 800,000 people, volunteers spend over 110,000 hours at the shelter each year. Assuming the prevailing hourly wage, payroll taxes and benefits, it would cost the San Francisco SPCA over \$1 million dollars annually to provide those services. In Tompkins County, a community of about 100,000 people, volunteers spend over 12,500

hours walking dogs, grooming cats, helping with adoptions, and doing routine but necessary office work, at a cost savings of approximately \$85,000 if the SPCA were to pay for those services at the entry level hourly rate.

The purpose of a volunteer program is to help a shelter help the animals. It is crucial to have procedures and goals in mind as part of the program. In Tompkins County, for example, the agency required all dogs available for adoption to get out of kennel socialization four times per day. This could not be accomplished by staff alone and therefore volunteers were recruited, trained and scheduled for specific shifts that would allow the agency to meet those goals. It became quickly apparent that having volunteers come in whenever they wanted did not serve those goals and so all volunteers were given instructions and a specific schedule.

X. A Compassionate Director

The final element of the No Kill equation is the most important of all, without which all other elements are thwarted—a hard working, compassionate animal control or shelter director not content to regurgitate tired clichés or hide behind the myth of "too many animals, not enough homes." Unfortunately, this one is also oftentimes the hardest one to demand and find.

But it clear—as better than a decade of success in San Francisco, Tompkins County, and now elsewhere demonstrates—that No Kill is simply not achievable without rigorous implementation of each and every one of these programs and services. It is up to us in the humane movement to demand them of our local shelters, and no longer to settle for illusory excuses and smokescreens shelters often put up in order to avoid implementing them.

**No Kill is simply
not achievable
without rigorous
implementation of
each and every one
of these programs.**

Defining “No Kill”



There is only one legitimate definition of No Kill. It is a community where:

- Healthy dogs and cats are saved;
- Treatable dogs and cats are saved; and,
- Healthy and treatable feral cats are saved.

Some shelters are seeking to save “healthy” or “adoptable” animals. The fact that a shelter or community is trying to accomplish this is laudable, but it doesn’t mean it is No Kill. Saving all healthy dogs and cats is the first step toward achieving a No Kill community, not the end goal. Can a shelter or community really justify killing animals with treatable conditions (such as dogs with food guarding, kittens with conjunctivitis, puppies with kennel cough, or a pet with a broken leg) if it takes the title “No Kill community”? It cannot.

Others claim that No Kill is achieved when healthy, as well as sick and injured but treatable dogs and cats are saved. The definition might have some appeal, but it is out of touch with the sentiment of millions of cat lovers who feed alley cats in their communities. If healthy feral cats are still being killed en masse, a No Kill community is simply not achieved.

In short, neither of these positions is ethically defensible. The No Kill movement’s break with traditional sheltering is less about saving “pet” dogs and cats and more about focusing on the individual animal. Regardless of whether a shelter takes in 30, 300, 3,000 or 30,000 dogs and cats each year, No Kill is premised on—in fact demands—fundamental fairness to individual animals.

This commitment is echoed in the mission statement of virtually every humane society and SPCA in the country which claims to cherish animals, enforce their rights, and teach compassion. Yet, these lofty goals can only be

achieved if we judge, treat, and devise a plan for shelter animals individually with all the resources we can muster.

In practice, that means that shelters must put in place the programs and services that address the needs of each individual animal who comes through the door regardless of whether an animal is healthy, sick, injured, or feral.

Implicit within the No Kill philosophy is the understanding that some animals, such as those who are irremediably suffering or hopelessly ill, will be killed for reasons of mercy. That much we can all accept. We can also accept that dogs who are aggressive with a poor prognosis for rehabilitation are a direct and immediate public safety risk who cannot be adopted. But that is all we can accept.

The only animals dying in a No Kill community are dogs and cats who are irremediably suffering, are sick or injured with a poor or grave prognosis for rehabilitation, and vicious dogs with a poor prognosis. (This does not include shy or non-aggressive scared dogs.)

Nothing short of that is acceptable. And nothing less will do.

Building a Lifesaving Foundation

Accountability means having clear definitions, a lifesaving plan, and keeping track of your successes and failures. It is of primary importance for a shelter to record not only how many animals enter the shelter, but what types of animals they are: How many are neonatal kittens and puppies? How many are dogs with behavior problems? How many are sick? What types of injuries are most common? How many are injured? How are they coming to the shelter—are they owner surrenders? Strays? Different problems have different solutions.

Categories and definitions help determine the needs of the animals in your community. Once these are understood, the next step is to set goals—specific goals with timetables for getting there. Clear protocols should be established, and staff trained properly to ensure that each and every animal is given a fair evaluation and a chance for placement or treatment. Protocols are important because they ensure accountability from staff.

But protocols without flexibility can have the opposite effect: stifling innovation, causing lives to be needlessly lost, and allowing shelter employees who fail to save lives to hide behind a paper trail. Understanding that the only rule that can't be broken is the No Kill rule, the bottom line is this: Evaluate and treat each animal as an individual and stay flexible. Too many shelters lose sight of individual animals, staying rigid with their shelter protocols, believing these are engraved in stone. They are not.

Categorizing animals who enter the shelter is vital. A dog or cat who enters a shelter can come in healthy, sick, injured, unweaned or traumatized. To address what responses a shelter should undertake, No Kill shelters classify these animals into these and perhaps other categories.

Without an understanding of the various categories of shelter animals, it would be difficult to know which programs are needed. Nor would it be clear how many animals would be helped by any particular strategy. A community begins helping its animals by closely analyzing shelter statistics. How many of the dogs and cats killed are healthy? How many are sick or injured but treatable? How many have rehabilitatable behavior problems? The answers to these questions will determine what types of programs and services are needed, and how to effectively allocate resources to help the animals in a shelter's care.

However, categorization can also be used to obscure the truth and make it appear a shelter is doing a better job than it is. Categories like “adoptable,” “unadoptable,” or “unhealthy” can be intentionally misleading. According to the Humane Society of the United States and others who signed

a 2004 accord with recommendations for shelter record-keeping nationwide, feral cats would fall into the category of those animals who “suffer from a behavioral or temperamental characteristic that poses a health or safety risk or otherwise makes them unsuitable for placement as a pet.” (Asilomar Accords, Animal Statistics Table, Glossary of Terms, P.) Under the Accords, feral cats share the same category for hopelessly ill or irremediably suffering pets. And the same fate—death.

As a result, these groups are using categories—not to create programs that are most effective at saving lives—but to “spin” the numbers to make it appear a shelter is doing a better job than it actually is. In addition, and perhaps most disturbing of all, these categories are vague in and of themselves, leading to misuse and misapplication—such as calling a kitten with ringworm “untreatable,” or making a decision that a dog who is scared has a “temperamental characteristic that poses a health or safety risk or otherwise makes them unsuitable for placement.”

In a memo to the Board of Supervisors, for example, a Southern California shelter administrator claimed to be saving over 90% of “adoptable” animals, yet the shelter was still killing almost 80% of the cats



and a large percentage of dogs.

That is why it is important to make the categories specific, focused, and objective, rather than subjective criteria subject to the whim of unscrupulous shelter directors who want the statistics to hide the truth, rather than to help them save lives.

Proper categorization is the basis for accountability. It is also crucial to a strategy to increase lifesaving, lower birthrates, and help keep animals in their homes.

If a shelter claims to be “near No Kill,” yet it is still killing more animals than it is saving, there can be only one of two conclusions: it is miscategorizing animals, or it is falsifying the data. In order to achieve No Kill, a shelter must zero out deaths of Healthy animals, Medical-Treatable, Neonatal animals, Behavior animals, and Feral cats. This will be accomplished only when it saves roughly 85-95% of total intakes.

Useful Definitions

Useful definitions for purposes of building programs and allocating resources include the following:

Healthy animals are those who are reasonably well-behaved, old enough to be eating independently, and have manifested no signs of disease or injury.

Medical-Treatable animals are those who are sick or injured, but whose prognosis for rehabilitation is excellent, good, fair or guarded.

Medical-Non-Rehabilitatable animals are those who are sick or injured with a poor or grave prognosis.

Irremediably Suffering animals are Non-Rehabilitatable animals in severe pain.

Neonatal animals are motherless animals (ages one day to approximately three weeks) who are unable to eat on their own and are unable to survive without either maternal care or supplemental bottle feeding.

Court order are animals determined to be vicious by a court of law after a dangerous animal hearing.

Behavior animals are those animals who manifest a behavior condition but who do not pose the type of direct and immediate public safety risk that a truly vicious dog does, or whose prognosis for rehabilitation is guarded or better.

Feral cats are cats who are unsocialized to people.

Vicious dogs are those who are aggressive with a prognosis for rehabilitation which is poor and who pose a direct and immediate public safety risk.

Rabies animals are those required to be killed under state or local rabies prevention regulations. A dog or cat is not a “rabies” outcome if a ten day holding period is a legally acceptable alternative.

If such an animal is killed, they should be logged under the other relevant criteria, including Healthy.

A Framework

You Can't Legislate Success

Studies show that the primary reasons people do not alter their pets are cost and lack of access to spay/neuter services. Moreover, punitive legislation will only discourage people from caring for homeless pets or drive disadvantaged pet owners "underground," making them even harder to reach and help. Compounding the problem is the fact that enforcement of ordinances such as pet limit laws, cat licensing, mandatory spay/neuter, confinement/leash laws, and "nuisance" laws is often selective and complaint-based, leaving pet owners and caregivers vulnerable to retaliation from neighbors and others.

Worse, legislation may be worded so that the result of non-compliance is the impoundment and death of the animal. In fact, many jurisdictions have seen their impound and death rates increase following passage of such laws which give agencies carte blanche to round up and kill outdoor animals. In addition, most cats entering shelters are unowned (either their owners are relinquishing ownership or they are unowned strays and ferals), so cat licensing will not help them.

All the legislation in the world isn't going to make a community No Kill. Even if a law is passed, enforcement will be elusive, complaint driven, used to target feral cat caretakers and other animal lovers, and will provide nothing more than a drain on scarce animal shelter dollars and a diversion from the business of saving lives.

But the bottom line is this: the humane community needs to move past the notion that animals are dying in shelters because there are too many for the too few homes that are available. Animals are dying in shelters because shelters are either mired in defeatism and the ineffective policies of the past, or the shelters are simply inefficient, ineffective and indifferent. In short, animals in shelters are dying because people in shelters are killing them. If that is addressed, a community will be well on its way to No Kill.



An End to Excuses

In light of the revolutionary successes in San Francisco, Tompkins County (NY), and now increasingly elsewhere, why is uncontrolled killing still occurring in many communities? Is it because there are too many animals? Is it because there are not enough homes? Is it because of irresponsible people? Is it because we don't have enough mandatory laws? Is it because the animals aren't "adoptable"?

Most are dying for one reason: failure. A failure to learn from the past. A failure to implement the programs and services that save lives. A failure to hold

staff accountable. And a failure of caring. In other words, indifference.

While it is unfortunately true that there will always be animals who are too vicious, too sick or too injured to be saved, deflecting blame for the level of killing by saying that animal control is "forced" to kill large numbers of animals because of

k for Success

Involve the Community

The best way to work with the community to promote caring, compassion and responsible pet care is to help people do the right thing. That is why it is imperative that humane societies and animal control shelters focus on incentives, not citations. It is far more effective to empower people to love and keep companion animals than to blame and punish them.

Communities that take a punitive approach often do not see substantial decreases in killing, and in some cases, killing rates have actually increased. These measures can drive a deep, sometimes irreparable, wedge between the community and the shelter. On the other hand, turning from controlling animals and the public to saving lives and supporting the community brings many rewards: a public perception of the shelter as lifesavers, increased employee morale, increased donations and increased volunteers.

Time and time again, it has been shown that working cooperatively with people creates an atmosphere of trust and respect—a community where people willingly learn how to be responsible animal guardians and view the shelter as a resource, rather than the enemy. In communities that have built programs around this relationship, kill rate declines are unparalleled anywhere in the country.

Ending the killing of healthy and treatable pets means building, brick-by-brick, the programs, facilities, and community involvement necessary to lower birthrates, increase adoptions and keep animals with their loving, responsible caregivers. But most of all, it means believing in the community and trusting in the power of compassion.



public irresponsibility is simply not accurate.

If an employee cuts corners and does not clean and sanitize water bowls daily, thus leading to a parvovirus outbreak, or an employee does not scrub cat cages leading to spread of URI or panleukopenia, large numbers of animals will be needlessly killed.

If a shelter's adoption program fails to compete with pet stores or puppy mills, if it is located in a remote part of the community and does not take animals offsite, if it does not maintain adequate adoption hours, if the public finds it difficult to reach the shelter on the telephone, if customer service is poor, if a volunteer program is not in place, or foster care is not prioritized, or if a shelter does not maintain adequate volunteer support or a TNR program, animals will needlessly die.

None of these deaths are a result of public actions. While it is true that the public brings animals to the shelter, it is the shelter that kills them and one does not logically lead to or excuse the other.

Unconventional Wisdom

Every issue we look at a bit of traditional animal sheltering “dogma” and analyze it to see if it is true. We also offer a No Kill alternative - what we call “No Kill Know How” to give a different perspective oriented toward preserving and protecting life. If we accept responsibility for the dogs and cats in our shelter instead of hiding behind conventional wisdom, we are better suited to meet the challenges involved with saving lives.

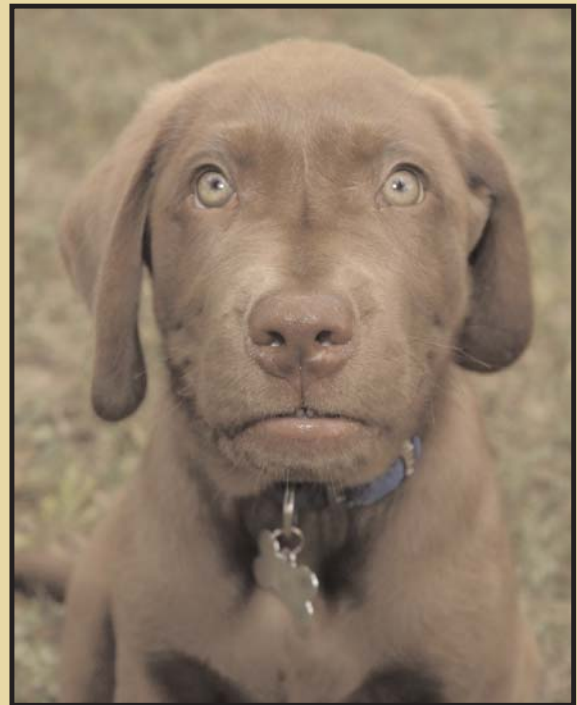
ADOPTING YOUR WAY TO NO KILL

Conventional Wisdom:

To increase the quantity of adoptions, you have to reduce the quality.

No Kill Know How:

The notion that one needs to reduce quality of homes in order to increase quantity is one of the anachronisms of old-guard, reactionary shelters who need a way to justify a paradigm of high impounds, high kill rates and low adoptions. In fact, some of the most successful industries in the United States have excelled in a consumer market demanding high volume coupled with increasing consumer awareness, information and requirement for quality. These agencies are able to meet demand for both quality and quantity. Quality and quantity are not, should not be perceived, and have never been, mutually exclusive.



During the early 1990s, North Shore Animal League (NSAL) was adopting out over 20,000 animals each and every year, even while rejecting one out of every three applications. According to NSAL: *The best adoption programs are designed to ensure that each animal is placed with a responsible person, one prepared to make a lifelong commitment, and to avoid the kinds of problems that may have caused the animal to be brought to the shelter. An important part of the process is to match the lifestyle and needs of the adopter with the individual dog or cat. If the screening process occasionally seems overly strict, try to remember that the shelter's first priority is to protect the animal's best interests. After selecting a pet, each potential adopter is thoroughly screened, including identity verification and reference checks. Because placing our pets in proper homes is so important to us, only two out of three applicants are ultimately approved. But for the more than 800,000 new pet owners who have met our high standards, the joy of providing a good home for a loving pet is well worth the extra trouble.*

No Kill's focus on high volume adoptions has nothing to do with lowering the quality of those adoptions. Increasing the number of adoptions has to do with keeping the shelter open when working people and

families with children can visit. It means taking animals offsite to where people work, live and play. It means bringing animals available for adoption to neighborhood events. It includes adoption incentives, foster care programs and working with rescue groups. Increasing adoptions means greater visibility in the community, competing with pet stores and puppy/kitten mills, good customer service, thoughtful but not overly bureaucratic screening, making the shelter a fun and exciting place to visit, and proactive marketing.

It has long been a cliché that a community cannot adopt its way out of killing. Like so much conventional wisdom, this viewpoint is also wrong.

As one commentator put it: *if each pet lives 10 years, on average, and the number of homes grows at the same rate that homes are lost through deaths and other attrition, then replacement homes would come available each year for more than twice as many dogs and slightly more cats than enter shelters. Since the inventory of pet-owning homes is growing, not just holding even, adoption could in theory replace all population control killing right now—if the animals and potential adopters were better introduced.*

The problem is that people get their pets from shelters only 15% of the time because shelters have historically done a poor job of getting good homes to adopt animals. An animal lover explained it best,

I tried to adopt from my local shelter, but they weren't open on the weekend, it was almost impossible to reach them on the telephone and when I did, I was treated rudely. Nonetheless, I raced down there one day after work, and the place was so dirty. It made

me cry to look into the faces of all those animals I knew would be killed. But I found this scared, skinny cat hiding in the back of his cage and I filled out an application. I was turned down because I didn't turn in the paperwork on time, which meant a half hour before closing, but I couldn't get there from work in time to do that. I tried to leave work early the next day, but I called and found out they had already killed the poor cat. I will never go back.

Adopting an animal means a shelter does not have to kill. Not only can a shelter adopt its way out of killing, it should.

The bottom line is that there are plenty of homes out there, and it is up to shelters to effectively promote their pets so that they find their way into those homes.

In other words, if shelters better promoted their animals, they could increase the number of homes available and replace all population control killing with adoptions.

Adopting an animal means a shelter does not kill that animal. Not only can a shelter adopt its way out of killing, it should.



Welcome to No Kill Sheltering

Published by the No Kill Advocacy Center, No Kill Sheltering is a magazine for the humane community. Inside you will find information on animal care, No Kill philosophy, fundraising, how to run successful programs and more.

A No Kill Nation is Within our Reach

It is time to put aside the fatalistic attitudes that change is impossible; that a No Kill nation is unattainable; that the best we can offer homeless animals is the two prong strategy of failure: adopt some and kill the rest. It is up to everyone in the humane movement to work together to implement sheltering models that have saved thousands of animals. A No Kill nation is within our reach. And the No Kill Advocacy Center is here to help.

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