

How Does Your Community's Shelter **MEASURE** Up?

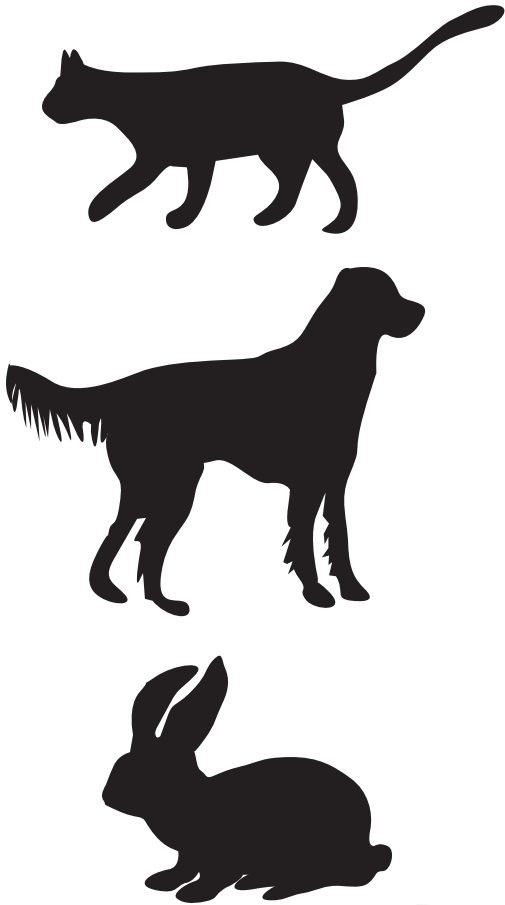


INCLUDING

- ✓ How to Calculate the Live Release Rate
- ✓ The Programs & Services Every Shelter Should Have
- ✓ Sample Report to Public Officials
- ✓ And more



Is Your Shelter Doing a **GOOD JOB?**



As the number of No Kill animal control shelters across the United States continues to grow, animal lovers nationwide are turning their attention to their local shelter and wondering whether it is meeting its lifesaving obligation to the animals and the community it serves. But how do you determine whether or not your local shelter is doing a good job? And what do you do when it is not?

This guide explains how to measure a shelter's performance and how to begin to hold shelter staff accountable when those results are not what they should be.



From No Kill Advocacy Center Director: **Nathan J. Winograd**



Dear No Kill Advocate:

Shelter killing is the leading cause of death for healthy dogs and cats in the United States. Today, an animal entering a shelter has a roughly one in two chance of making it out alive, and in some places it is as low as one in ten, with shelters blaming a lack of available homes as the cause of death. And yet, statistics reveal that there are over 10 times as many people looking to bring an animal into their home every year as there are animals being killed in shelters because they lack one. Millions of animals who enter our nation's shelters go out the back door in body bags rather than out the front door in the loving arms of adopters despite the fact that there are plenty of homes available. And when animal lovers question the excuses used to justify this killing, shelters and their national allies respond, "We are all on the same side," "We all want the same thing," "We are all animal lovers" and insist that criticism of shelters and staff is unfair and callous because "No one wants to kill." The facts, however, tragically and frequently tell a very different story.

Not long ago, I attended a City Council meeting on a matter related to the local shelter. As I waited for my issue to come up on the agenda, the Fire Chief spoke to the City Council. He talked about the goals for his agency during the coming fiscal year. Having just returned from a national conference, he learned how his agency's response times compared to the best performing departments in the country. He admitted that his Fire District lagged behind the very best. He spoke of how he was going to close the gap by implementing a series of short, medium, and long term goals that he had been taught at the conference, and that he would return to the Council with measurable results. He was aspiring for his department to be the best, he admitted how it fell short, and he had a plan to correct that. It was the mark of a true professional.

In sheltering, we have the exact opposite: animal control "professionals" denying reality, shunning accountability, ignoring success, all while betraying the animals (and the citizens) they are pledged to serve. In Austin, Texas, for example, the former director of the shelter who resisted No Kill defrayed criticism for her appalling kill rates by telling the City Council that she was doing better than the worst performing shelters in Texas. By that standard, every shelter is doing a good job. In the Minneapolis, Minnesota area, the director of the large humane society defended her 42% killing rate for dogs by saying it was better than the national average. It was, in fact, actually worse than the national average, but the question remains: *why aspire to mediocrity and failure?*

As I was listening to the Fire Chief, I was struck by the contrast between how staff in his department approached their responsibilities: wanting to be the best, being accountable to results, being proactive in terms of improvement; and how shelter staff continues to avoid accountability at all costs, even in the face of rampant neglect and abuse. It is this very attitude that is at the heart of why our nation's sheltering system is so tragically broken. How can you fix a problem you refuse to admit exists? How can shelters reform their practices when they refuse to have standards and benchmarks that would hold them accountable to the best performing shelters in the nation?

They can't. They don't. And they won't. So you will have to do it for them. You need to arm yourself with the data in four key areas—per capita intake rate, live release rate, adoption potential, and the programmatic commitment of the shelter. This information reveals exactly how your local shelter is doing. You can then compare and contrast your shelter with those of successful communities and present that information to legislators, the media, and others in an effective way. In fact, one of the turning points in the fight for a No Kill Austin—which ultimately led to the former director's reassignment and allowed Austin to achieve a 98% live release rate—was the report No Kill advocates did comparing lifesaving in Austin to Reno, Nevada. You need to do the same. This guide will show you how.

DETERMINING Your Shelter's Performance

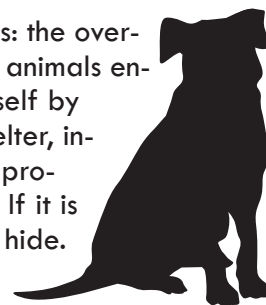
WHAT IS YOUR SHELTER'S LIVE RELEASE RATE?

1

Look for a live release rate of 98%-99%. Today, there are hundreds of communities across America with 90th percentile live release rates. If they can do it, so can your community.

Poorly performing shelters, under increasing pressure from the public, are responding to criticism by claiming they are saving all “adoptable” animals. To shelters mired in killing, the term “unadoptable” is interpreted very broadly. Some shelters, for example, consider a kitten with a minor cold or a dog older than five years to be unadoptable. And with national organizations telling communities that they are each permitted to define for themselves which animals are healthy or treatable, that each community must determine for itself its lifesaving commitment, shelters now claim that they are No Kill by simply defining the animals away. Los Angeles County, for example, claimed it was saving almost all “adoptable” animals despite killing half of all dogs and eight out of ten cats. In Michigan, the humane society claimed it was saving “all adoptable animals” despite killing seven out of ten animals, including puppies and kittens.

To determine if a shelter is doing a good job, there is only one statistic that matters: the overall live release rate. Successful No Kill communities are proving that roughly 99% of animals entering a shelter can be placed. You need to determine the live release rate for yourself by requesting raw data from the shelter as discussed below. If it is an animal control shelter, including a private SPCA or humane society with an animal control contract, they must provide this information under state Public Records Act or Freedom of Information Laws. If it is a private shelter and they refuse to provide this information, they have something to hide.



ACQUIRE THE FOLLOWING STATISTICS

A: All animals with final dispositions/outcomes, including live outcomes (adoption, transfer, reclaim) and those who died, are missing/stolen, and were killed, including “owner requested euthanasia,” with only the following exception: animals brought to a shelter’s medical clinic for procedures such as vaccines or sterilization where it was understood that the animal was going to be retrieved following the medical procedure.

B: All deaths: animals who were killed (including “owner requested euthanasia”), animals who died in the shelter’s custody or constructive custody (such as foster care), and animals who are missing and unaccounted for.

C: All live outcomes: those adopted, reclaimed by their families, and transferred to No Kill rescue groups or other shelters (where they are not at risk for being killed). It does *not* include animals still in the shelter’s custody or constructive custody (such as foster care).

THEN CALCULATE

The live release rate is calculated as follows: C divided by A. Conversely, its death rate is B divided by A. The live release rate plus the death rate should always equal 100% of outcomes.

$$\frac{C}{A} \quad \text{THE FORMULAS} \quad \frac{B}{A}$$

Live Release Rate Death Rate

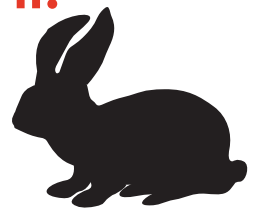
WHAT IS YOUR SHELTER'S ADOPTION RATE?

2

Successful high-volume adoption communities, even those with high intake rates, have adopted their way out of killing. If they can do it, so can your community.

In order to defray criticism for their low live release rate, shelters will claim that they get too many animals and there are not enough homes. They will claim that other communities with higher live release rates are somehow unique. They will claim that “no one cares” in their community because they have low adoption rates. In reality, they are to blame for doing such a poor job. Shelters can adopt their way out of killing and many have. Using the most successful adoption communities as a benchmark and adjusting for population, U.S. shelters combined should be adopting almost nine million animals a year. That is over three times the number being killed for lack of a home. In fact, it is more than total impounds, and of those, almost half do not need a new home (they can be reclaimed by their families, they are “feral” cats who need sterilization and release, or they are irremediably suffering). But the news gets even better. There are over 30 million people who are going to get an animal next year. Some are already committed to adopting from a shelter. Some are already committed to getting one from a breeder or other commercial source. But the vast majority have not decided where that animal will come from and research shows they can be influenced to adopt from a shelter. That’s tens of millions of people vying for roughly two million animals. So even if over 80% of those people got their animal from somewhere other than a shelter, we could still zero out the killing. And many communities are proving it.

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COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Washoe County (Reno), Nevada is a successful community. It adopted out 9,668 animals, with a human population of 425,000. If they had your community's population, how many animals would they be adopting out?

Let's compare Los Angeles, a city of 3.8 million people, to the successful community of Washoe County, Nevada. Comparing adoption rates with Reno and adjusting for population, Los Angeles City shelters should be adopting out over 86,000 animals a year, more than total impounds. And with 9,452 dogs killed and 13,467 cats killed in 2011, the achievement of a No Kill Los Angeles should have already been achieved.



ADOPTION RATE

THE FORMULA

$$\frac{9,668}{425,000} = \frac{X}{\text{population}}$$

LOS ANGELES, CA

$$\frac{9,668}{425,000} = \frac{X}{3,800,000} \quad 425,000x = 36,738,400,000 \quad X = 86,443$$

WHAT IS THE SHELTER'S PER CAPITA INTAKE RATE?

3



Some No Kill communities are small, taking in a few hundred or a few thousand animals a year. But others are large, taking in as many as 20,000 annually. Nonetheless, shelters will claim that, unlike the communities across the country which have ended the killing, they get a lot more animals. Naturally, a city like Los Angeles will get more animals than a city like Reno because they are bigger. But they also have more people to adopt, to foster, to volunteer. When comparing intake rates, cities like Reno take in more animals for the size of the population. In fact, adjusting for population, Reno takes in five times more animals than Los Angeles. To compare apples to apples, you need to calculate the shelter's per capita intake rate.

The average U.S. community takes in about 14 dogs and cats per 1,000 human residents. But there are No Kill communities which take in several times that. For example, Washoe County takes in about 39 dogs and cats per 1,000 people. In 2011, they saved 94% of all animals communitywide. Other No Kill communities take in as many as 73 animals per 1,000 people. If they can do it, so can your community.

HOW TO CALCULATE INTAKE RATE

INTAKE RATE

THE FORMULA

If your community has 1,000 live intakes (do not include wildlife*) every year and a human population of 100,000 people, the per capita intake rate is as illustrated.

**Wildlife is not included when calculating intake rates. This does not mean their lives do not matter; they most certainly do. Ensuring that every animal entering a shelter—whether classified as “domestic” or “wild”—is treated as an individual whose right to life is paramount is what the No Kill movement is all about. But adoption is not an option for some wildlife species under current state and federal laws and including them in intake, but not adoption rates, skews the data. When wild animals cannot be released back to their habitats, shelters should work with No Kill wildlife rehabilitators to place non-adoptable ones into sanctuaries.*

$$\frac{\text{intakes}}{\text{population}} = \frac{X}{1,000}$$

FOR EXAMPLE

$$\frac{1,000}{100,000} = \frac{X}{1,000}$$

$$100,000x = 1,000,000$$

$$X = 10$$

The community takes in 10 animals per 1,000 people.

IS THE SHELTER IMPLEMENTING THE NO KILL EQUATION COMPREHENSIVELY?

4

Shelters must take killing off the table for all animals who are not irremediably suffering, and utilize the No Kill Equation not sometimes, not merely when it is convenient or politically expedient to do so, but for every single animal, every single time.



THE NO KILL EQUATION

Killing is a choice. It is a choice made by the person who runs a shelter to take the easy, uncaring and inhumane way out. No Kill is also a choice. It is a choice made by the person who runs the shelter to replace that killing with alternatives. Its success is therefore directly proportional to the commitment that is made to it. A shelter director who claims to have tried “No Kill,” but who then sent one litter of motherless kittens into a foster home and the other litter into the kill room, has failed to make the necessary level of commitment required to replace killing entirely. In such circumstances, No Kill has not failed. It offered an alternative, a choice—in this case, foster care—that the director willfully chose to disregard in favor of killing.

Shelter staff in one community criticized for high rates of killing, for example, defended themselves by claiming they did the programs of the No Kill Equation such as offsite adoptions. When pressed, however, they admitted they only do two offsite adoption events a year. By contrast, one community’s No Kill shelter does seven offsite adoption events every *single day*, which are responsible for 25% of all adoptions. In other words, the latter did more offsite adoption events in one day than the former did in an entire year.

The size and scope of programs are determined by one thing alone: *need*. To achieve No Kill success, therefore, a shelter must implement the programs and services of the No Kill Equation not in a piecemeal or in a limited manner, but comprehensively so that they replace killing entirely.

The Programs & Services Every Animal Shelter Should Have

- ✓ Community Cat/Dog Sterilization
- ✓ Rescue Partnerships
- ✓ Foster Care
- ✓ Volunteers
- ✓ Comprehensive Adoption Programs
- ✓ High-Volume, Low-Cost Sterilization
- ✓ Pet Retention Programs
- ✓ Public Relations/Community Involvement
- ✓ Proactive Redemptions
- ✓ Medical & Behavior Programs
- ✓ A Compassionate Director



SAMPLE REPORT TO A LOCAL GOVERNMENT



BUILDING A NO KILL COMMUNITY

Today, No Kill is a humane, sustainable, cost-effective model that works hand in hand with public health and safety, while fulfilling a fiscal responsibility to taxpayers. The success of this approach across the country proves the viability of the No Kill model and the above principles. And in every community where it is a reality, it has been achieved through rigorous implementation of programs and services which have come to be known as the “No Kill Equation.” In **<<COMMUNITY>>**, it is time for change. It is time to reject the failed philosophies and poor performance of the past. We have an unprecedented opportunity for a new beginning. The citizens of our community are kind, caring, and generous. They deserve an animal shelter that reflects, rather than undermines, their values.

In the last two decades, several shelters in hundreds of communities have comprehensively implemented a bold series of programs and services to reduce birthrates, increase placements, and keep animals with their responsible caretakers. As a result, they are achieving unprecedented results, saving upwards of 99% of all impounded animals in open admission animal control facilities. Some of these communities are in urban communities and others are in rural communities. Some are in politically liberal communities and others are in very conservative ones. Some are in municipalities with high *per capita* incomes and others are in communities known for high rates of poverty. Some are run by municipal shelters and others by private ones with animal control contracts. These communities share very little in common demographically. What they do share is leadership at their shelters who have comprehensively implemented the

programs and services, collectively referred to as the “No Kill Equation.”

The fundamental lesson from the experiences of these communities is that the choices made by shelter managers determine whether animals live or die. Several communities are more than doubling adoptions and cutting killing by as much as 90%—and it isn’t taking them five years or more to do it. They are doing it virtually overnight. In Washoe County, Nevada, local shelters began a lifesaving initiative that saw adoptions increase as much as 80% and deaths decline by 51% in one year, despite taking in over 15,000 dogs and cats.

In addition to the speed with which it was attained, what also makes their success so impressive is that the community takes in over two times the number of animals *per capita* than the U.S. national average and as much as five times the rate of neighboring commu-

nities and major U.S. cities. In 2011, however, 94% of dogs and cats were saved, despite an economic and foreclosure crisis that has gripped the region. They are proving that communities can quickly save the vast majority of animals once they commit to do so, even in the face of public irresponsibility or economic crisis. This is consistent with the results in other communities. There are now No Kill communities in California and New York, Michigan and Texas, Kentucky and Virginia, and elsewhere. In Austin, Texas, the municipal shelter takes in roughly 20,000 animals a year but is saving 98% of dogs and cats. In short, there are no valid excuses as to why our community cannot do the same if it chooses to.

The leadership of <<SHELTER>>, however, remains steadfast in their refusal to embrace the No Kill paradigm. Among the various excuses for why it cannot be done are that the shelter does not have adequate funding to do so and such funding is not available in this economic climate, there are simply too many animals for the available homes ("pet overpopulation"), No Kill is not feasible in a municipal sheltering context, and the No Kill philosophy is inconsistent with their public safety obligations. These excuses are just that: excuses.

"WE CAN'T AFFORD IT."

To begin with, many of the programs identified as key components of saving lives are more cost-effective than impounding, warehousing, and then killing animals. Some rely on private philanthropy, as in the use of foster homes and rescue groups, which shifts costs of care from public taxpayers to private individuals and groups. Others, such as the use of volunteers, augment paid human resources. Still others, such as adoptions, bring in revenue. And, finally, some, such as sterilizing rather than killing community cats, are simply less expensive, with exponential savings in terms of reducing births.

In addition, a 2017 University of Denver study found that the total dollar value of additional spending by consumers and businesses and other economic benefits realized by the City of Austin,

TX, between 2010 - 2016 as a result of passing a No Kill ordinance was \$157,452,503, with an investment of just over \$30,000,000—a return on investment of over 400%. And, the study authors note, that's "the most conservative possible measure of the data." In other words, the true economic benefit is likely to be much higher.

It also brought new businesses like Google to Austin and improved overall civic health and engagement: "An additional benefit appears to be the positive contribution of Austin's progressive animal welfare policies to its brand equity. This impact is important as municipalities compete with each other to attract employee demographics that in turn draw new business and new economic growth to their area. Although not included in the final economic impact calculation, the potential impacts of progressive animal welfare policies on larger social and environmental outcomes, including public health, social capital, and community engagement, have important implications for Austin's ability to promote and sustain the health and well-being of both its human and animal residents."

The conclusion? Not only is No Kill cost effective, it creates an economic windfall.

For more information, see *Dollars & Sense: The Economic Benefits of No Kill Animal Control* at nokilladvocacycenter.org.

"IT'S PET OVERPOPULATION."

The second reason often cited for failure to embrace and/or achieve No Kill is the idea of pet overpopulation, but the data here has also not borne out the claim. It is important to note that the argument that there are enough homes for shelter animals does not also include any claims that some people aren't irresponsible with animals. It doesn't mean it wouldn't be better if there were fewer of them being impounded. Nor does it mean that shelters don't have institutional obstacles to success. But it does mean that these problems are not insurmountable. And it does mean shelters can do something other than killing for the vast majority of animals.

In the United States, approximately two million

dogs and cats are killed in shelters every year. Of these, given data on the incidence of aggression in dogs and live release rates at the best performing shelters in the country from diverse regions and demographics, roughly 99% of all shelter animals are “savable.” The remainder consists of irremediably suffering animals and vicious dogs whose prognosis for rehabilitation is poor or grave. That would put the number of additional dogs and cats needing homes at 1.9 million.

These same demographics also tell us that every year, roughly 30 million Americans will bring a new dog or cat into their home, and tens of millions of those households have not decided where they will get that animal and can be influenced to adopt from a shelter. Even if the vast majority of those acquired a dog or cat from somewhere other than a shelter, U.S. shelters could still zero out the killing. On top of that, not all animals entering shelters need adoption: Some will be lost strays who will be reclaimed by their family (shelters which are comprehensive in their lost pet reclaim efforts, for example, have demonstrated that as many as two-thirds of stray dogs can be reunited with their families). Others are unsocialized community cats who need sterilization and release. Some will be vicious dogs or are irremediably suffering and will be placed in a sanctuary, provided palliative care or, tragically, killed. In the end, a shelter only needs to find new homes for roughly half of all incoming animals.

<<COMMUNITY>> has a population of roughly <<POPULATION>> people. Intake at <<SHELTER>> in <<YEAR>> was <<TOTAL LIVE INTAKES OF DOMESTIC ANIMALS>>. That is an intake rate of about <<PER CAPITA INTAKE RATE>> animals for every 1,000 human residents of the county. They killed <<TOTAL DEATHS>>, or <<DEATH RATE>>% of all the animals. By contrast, Washoe County, Nevada saves 94% of animals even though they take in over <<NUMBER>> times as many animals per capita, about 39 pets per 1,000 people. In fact, there are No Kill communities with per capita in-

take rates as high as 73 pets per 1,000 people. If <<SHELTER>> did the same level of adoptions as they do in Washoe County, our community should be able to adopt out about <<ADJUSTED ADOPTIONS>> animals per year, more than total impounds.

From the perspective of achievability, therefore, the prognosis for No Kill success in our community is very good. But let’s put all this aside. Let’s assume “pet overpopulation” is real and insurmountable. To do that, we have to ignore the data. We also have to ignore the experiences of successful communities. In the United States, to accept the “No Kill is impossible” argument requires pretending that No Kill communities do not exist.

How does this change our support for the No Kill philosophy and the programs and services that make it possible? Even if “pet overpopulation” were true, it doesn’t change the calculus. In <<COMMUNITY>>, the pound is killing roughly <<DEATH RATE>> of all incoming animals. And although the evidence is overwhelming to the contrary, let’s say that shelter can never cross the 99% live release rate goal because of “pet overpopulation.” What is wrong with saving more? If our shelter put in place the programs and services that brought rates of shelter killing to all-time lows in communities throughout the United States, they can save additional lives, regardless of whether they ever achieve an entirely No Kill community. That is worth doing and worth doing without delay.

For more information, see *You Can Do It! Adopt Your Way Out of Killing* at nokilladvocacycenter.org.

“WE’RE A MUNICIPAL SHELTER.”

A No Kill shelter is one which saves all healthy and treatable animals, roughly 99% of all incoming animals. It does not matter if the shelter is public or private, municipal or a contract facility, “open-admission” or “limited-admission.” What matters is who is running the facility and how dedicated that person is to implementing the programs and services which make lifesaving

possible. What matters is whether the political establishment is willing to hold that director accountable to results, rather than allowing him or her to hide behind overused clichés about “public irresponsibility” and the “need to kill.”

As indicated above, there are now communities saving 99% of dogs and cats and many of those communities are being led in that initiative by the open admission municipal shelter. The pound in Austin, Texas takes in roughly 20,000 animals a year and is saving 98% of all dogs and cats. In other communities, the initiative is run by private shelters with animal control contracts. They are also “open-admission” shelters, acting as municipal shelters under contract. To suggest it cannot be done when it, in fact, has been done across the country is a non-starter. (As an aside, the term “open-admission” is used normatively to imply a “better” shelter than one which does not kill animals by limiting admissions. The argument being made is that some shelters are derelict because they refuse to kill animals. Aside from this absurdity, it is important to note that such use of the term is misleading as many communities have proven that “open-admission” does not have to be an open door to the killing of animals as it is in our community. Moreover, the term “open-admission” is itself a misnomer as these facilities are actually closed to compassionate people who do not want to see animals killed.)

For more information, see *No Kill 101: A Primer on No Kill Animal Control Sheltering for Public Officials* at nokilladvocacycenter.org.

“WE MUST PROTECT PUBLIC SAFETY.”

Unfortunately, there are some animals who are hopelessly ill or injured, irremediably suffering, or in the case of dogs, vicious with a poor prognosis for rehabilitation. These animals are not adoption candidates and sadly, at this time in history, they are often killed, unless hospice care and sanctuaries are available. But since the No Kill philosophy does not mandate that vicious dogs or irremediably sick animals be made

available for adoption, it is consistent with public health and safety.

For more information, see *No Kill 101: A Primer on No Kill Animal Control Sheltering for Public Officials* at nokilladvocacycenter.org.

THE NO KILL EQUATION

The first step toward lifesaving success is a decision, a commitment to reject kill-oriented ways of doing business. No Kill starts as an act of will. Following a commitment to No Kill is the need for accountability. Accountability requires clear definitions, a lifesaving plan, and protocols and procedures oriented toward preserving life. 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 inflexible protocols 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. 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. The community is at the heart of a successful No Kill effort: they volunteer, they foster animals, they rescue, they socialize animals and they assist with adoptions. After the Nevada Humane Society embraced the No Kill philosophy, the number of volunteers went from a dozen to nearly 8,000; while the number of foster homes increased from a handful to roughly 2,500. By working with people, implementing lifesaving programs, and treating each life as precious, a shelter can transform itself.

The mandatory programs and services include:

I. Community Cat/Dog Sterilization: Commu-

nity sterilization programs humanely reduce impounds and killing.

II. High-Volume, Low-Cost Sterilization: No- and low-cost, high-volume sterilization reduces the number of animals entering the shelter system, allowing more resources to be allocated toward saving lives.

III. Rescue Groups: An adoption or transfer/transport to a rescue group frees up scarce cage and kennel space, reduces expenses for feeding, cleaning, and killing, and improves a community's rate of lifesaving. Because millions of dogs and cats are killed in shelters annually, rare is the circumstance in which a rescue group should be denied an animal.

IV. Foster Care: Foster care is a low-cost, and often no-cost way of increasing a shelter's capacity, caring for sick and injured or behaviorally challenged animals, and thus saving more lives.

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. If shelters better promoted their animals and had adoption programs responsive to community needs, including public access hours for working people, offsite adoptions, adoption incentives, and effective marketing, they could increase the number of homes available and replace killing with adoptions. Contrary to conventional wisdom, shelters can adopt their way out of killing.

VI. Pet Retention Programs: While some surrenders of animals to shelters are unavoidable, others can be prevented—but only if shelters work with people to help them solve their problems. Saving animals requires shelters to develop innovative strategies for keeping people and their companion animals together. And the more a community sees its shelters as a place to turn for advice and assistance, the easier this job will be.

VII. Medical & Behavior Programs: To meet its commitment to a lifesaving guarantee for all savable animals, shelters need to keep animals happy and healthy and keep animals moving efficiently through the system. To do this, shelters must put in place comprehensive vaccination, handling, cleaning, socialization, and care policies before animals get sick and rehabilitative efforts for those who come in sick, injured, unweaned, or traumatized.

VIII. Public Relations/Community Involvement: Increasing adoptions, maximizing donations, recruiting volunteers and partnering with community agencies comes down to increasing the shelter's public exposure. And that means consistent marketing and public relations. Public relations and marketing are the foundation of a shelter's activities and success.

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 make the difference between success and failure and, for the animals, life and death.

X. Proactive Redemptions: One of the most overlooked opportunities for reducing killing in animal control shelters is increasing the number of lost animals returned to their families. This includes matching reports of lost animals with animals in the shelter, rehoming animals in the field, and use of technology such as posting lost animals on the internet.

XI. 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 continue killing, while regurgitating tired clichés about "public irresponsibility" or hiding behind the myth of "too many animals, not enough homes."

COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION

To succeed fully, however, <<SHELTER>> should not implement the programs piecemeal or in a limited manner. If they are sincere in their desire to stop the killing, shelter leadership will implement programs to the point that they replace killing entirely. Combining rigorous, comprehensive implementation of the No Kill Equation with best practices and accountability of staff in cleaning, handling, and care of animals, must be the standard.

Before it embraced the No Kill philosophy, for example, animal control in Austin, Texas allowed only employees to participate in its foster care program. The shelter claimed it was implementing the programs and services of the No Kill Equation, but it was excluding thousands of animal lovers from participating in the lifesaving effort, seriously limiting how many lives they save. When they finally began implementing the programs in earnest, their live release rate reached 98%.

A shelter committed to No Kill does not send neonatal orphaned kittens into foster care “sometimes,” but rather every time. A shelter committed to No Kill does not merely allow rescue groups access to animals “some of the time,” but every time a legitimate rescue group is willing to take over care and custody of the animal. Indeed, a No Kill shelter actively seeks these groups out and contacts a particular rescue organization whenever an animal meets its criteria.

By way of another example, traditional shelters do little more than have people fill out lost pet reports when they call about missing pets. As a result, in a typical shelter, less than 2% of cats and roughly 20% of dogs are reclaimed by their families. At <<SHELTER>>, <<RECLAIM RATE>> of animals are returned to their families. This is unfortunate because being more proactive and comprehensive would have a significant impact on lifesaving.

Shelters in communities that have systematized

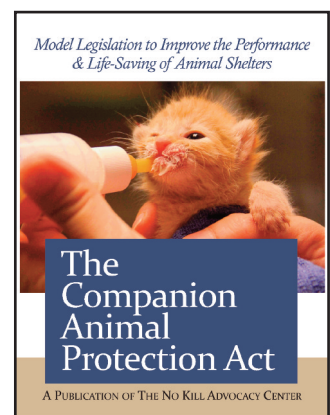
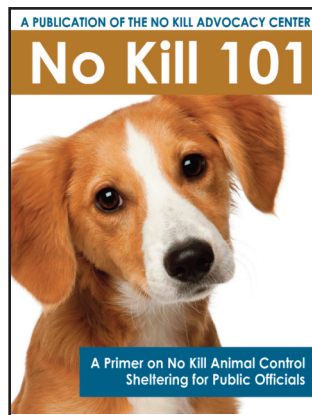
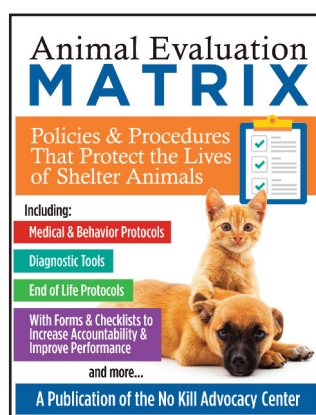
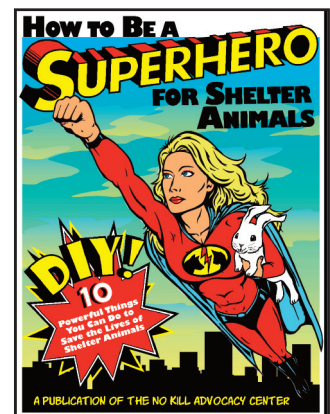
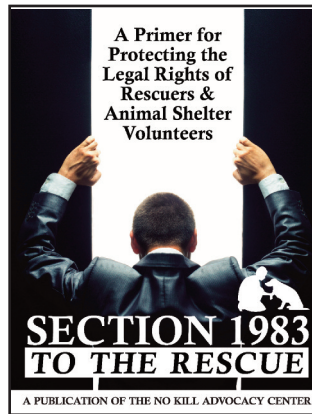
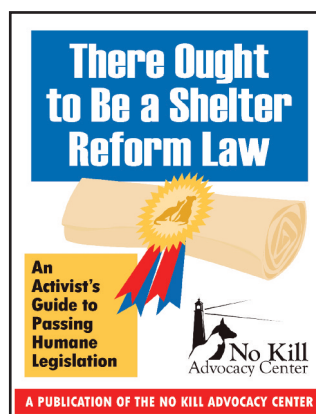
their approach and become more proactive have more than doubled this rate of redemption. Washoe County Animal Services in Reno, Nevada, for example, returned 7% of lost cats and 65% of lost dogs to their homes. Given the high per capita intake of animals (which some suggest would evidence high rates of “public irresponsibility”) one would expect the agency to have a very low redemption rate. Instead, it is very near the top in the nation. Why? The shelter is proactive in finding the people who have lost the pets.

Before impounding stray dogs, Washoe County animal control officers check for identification, scan for microchips, knock on doors in the neighborhood where the animal was found, and talk to area residents. They also carry mobile telephones so that they can immediately call the missing animal’s family and facilitate a quick reunion. While this may seem an obvious course of action, it is, unfortunately, uncommon in American shelters—often with tragic outcomes. The more traditional approach is simply to impound any animals found wandering the streets and to transport them immediately to the pound. Once there they can get lost in the system, compete for kennel space with other animals, and are often put to death. In Washoe County, impound is a last resort. But if animals are impounded, shelter staff is equally as proactive in facilitating redemptions. They immediately post to their website photographs, identifying information, and the location of where the animal was found. People can search for the animals from their computers at home or at work.

In short, shelters must utilize the programs and services of the No Kill Equation not sometimes, not merely when it is convenient or politically expedient to do so, but for every single animal, every single time. It is primarily the shift from a reactive to proactive orientation and from a casual, *ad-hoc*, limited implementation to a comprehensive one, which will lead to the greatest declines in killing, and fix <<COMMUNITY>>’s broken animal shelter system.

My Local Shelter Doesn't Measure Up NOW WHAT?

If you are like most Americans, you live in a community where the local shelter will not measure up when its job performance is weighed with these four key indicators. In that case, your next step is to mount a campaign for reform. Visit the No Kill Advocacy Center for free guides and other resources designed to arm you with the knowledge and tools you need to succeed in transforming your local shelter into the safe haven for animals that it should be. With your help, we can take one more step toward a No Kill nation.



These guides & more available in
our No Kill Advocate's Toolkit at:



nokilladvocacycenter.org

**Shelter
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**Together,
we can
change that.**



**A NO  KILL NATION
IS WITHIN OUR REACH**

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