

Animal Shelter / Community Strategies



Pet welfare, control of pet populations, and safety for pets and citizens is a community responsibility. Success is dependent on community awareness and support. The reasons that animals end up in shelters are varied, and multiple solutions are needed to decrease the number of pets surrendered as well as increase the numbers that can be reclaimed or adopted.

In order to plan community programs, shelters must collect accurate information about the numbers of

animals handled. Recording the numbers only in categories of intake, return, adopted, euthanized is not sufficient to define animal control services based on community needs. Are the animals owned, stray, roaming, or feral; adoptable, adoptable but not wanted, or unadoptable? Are they healthy; do they exhibit any behavioral problems?

Unadoptable: Is an animal that cannot, in good conscience, be released to a home. Either the animal has temperament/behavioral issues or its health is in jeopardy. Statistically 90% of animals are turned over to shelters due to some sort of temperament / behavioral / training issue that the owners were unable / unwilling to correct. Elderly animals and those in poor health are also unadoptable.

Adoptable but not wanted: Are healthy animals without any huge issues, that people simply don't want. A big dog in a condo community, a tiny dog in a rural community, a media maligned breed, etc. It's not the dogs fault, but if the right type of home doesn't enter that shelter at that time - they might as well be unadoptable. This is why there are so many rescue groups that take these types of animals and promote them to the types of homes that WILL want them.

Adoptable: Are typically younger animals in good health that do not exhibit any extremes (not too big, too small, too excitable, etc.)



Without good statistics, it is difficult to plan community programs, shelter operations or to evaluate plans to reduce the numbers of unwanted dogs and cats euthanized annually.

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Educate and Inform

- Inform the public about what it means to be a responsible pet owner and how the numbers of unwanted dogs and cats can be reduced
- Use local media as an outlet for public education and to advertise shelter animals available for adoption
- Hold microchip and rabies clinics; distribute literature on responsible ownership
- Distribute information, conduct presentations on animal safety/dog bite prevention
- Use of TV/VCR in adoption area to play educational pet videos
- Subscribe to AKC Family Dog magazine; provides news and info for staff and visitors
- Encourage use of AKC Canine Good Citizenship Program



Promote Spaying and Neutering

- All dogs and cats adopted from shelter are spayed/neutered before leaving the shelter
- Spay/Neuter vouchers are offered to owners reclaiming unaltered animals; reclaim and board fees are waived if spay/neuter offer is accepted
- Coordinate with area vets for participation in reduced fee spay/neuters
- Apply for grants to fund spay/neuter vouchers
- Set up routine transports to existing low-cost spay/neuter facilities

Encourage Stable Homes

- Work with area trainers and dog clubs to establish possible discounts on classes to dogs adopted from shelter
- Provide adopters with contact information for area dog professionals as support for any needed behavior modification



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Increase Adoptions

- Provide additional part time staff or volunteers to serve as adoption counselors to help potential adopters make correct choice
 - Establish a website for available animals and keep it current
 - Adoption application forms should be available on the website
 - Maintain a well organized breed waiting list by specific breeds; check the list often as animals arrive at the shelter. Call possible adopters first, then breed specific rescue
 - Hold weekend adoption events at participating businesses or at the local park – and advertise it in advance
 - Have an open house; promote it as an opportunity for people to learn more about the shelter and meet the staff
- Work with local breed clubs for placement of purebred dogs and cats
 - Reduce the adoption fee for senior animals
 - Increase awareness of adopting from the shelter through posters in public places (library, post office, community centers)
 - Create success stories about adopted shelter animals in their new homes; ask the media to help publicize the stories
 - The adoption process should always be friendly to encourage discussion and enable a good match

Enforcement

- Well written leash law that prevents dogs roaming at large, while allowing responsible owners to work, train, and exercise their dogs off-lead
- Nuisance law to prevent destruction of property by loose animals
- Explicit dangerous dog law
- Enforcement of rabies vaccinations