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# Community Assessment and Planning for the Humane Movement

by Aimee St. Arnaud



**Best Friends**  
ANIMAL SOCIETY

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## About Best Friends

Best Friends is working with you – and with humane groups all across the country – to bring about a time when there are No More Homeless Pets.

The sanctuary at Angel Canyon, in the Golden Circle of southern Utah, is home, on any given day, to about 1,500 dogs, cats, and other animals from all over the country. Many of them need just a few weeks of special care before they're ready to go to good new homes. Others, who are older and sicker, or who have suffered extra trauma, find a home and a haven here, and are given loving care for the rest of their lives.

Best Friends manages a model No More Homeless Pets campaign, with shelters and humane groups statewide, to ensure that every healthy companion animal that's ever born can be guaranteed a loving, caring home.

And Best Friends reaches across the nation, helping humane groups, individual people, and entire communities to set up spay/neuter, shelter, foster, and adoption programs in their own neighborhoods, cities, and states.

The work of Best Friends is supported entirely through the donations of our members. Through the generous hearts and hands of people like you, we can ensure that animals who come into the care of Best Friends will never again be alone, hungry, sick, afraid, or in pain.

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## Introduction

**“Community planning?  
We don’t need no stinkin’  
community planning!”**



**Or do we?**

Well, before you decide, let’s get a handle on what it is and how it can help your community work together to better address the root causes, as well as the symptoms, of the homeless pet problem.

It’s fair to say that most people in the humane movement got involved through a personal encounter with a homeless animal and the sinking realization that their experience was just the tip of an enormous iceberg.

For many of us, that realization gave birth to a commitment to do something to help the animals: to take as many as possible from the pound and find homes for them, to promote or fund spay/neuter, to educate the public, to build a more humane shelter, or to do some combination of these.

As we got more involved, we got busier and busier. “The faster I go, the more behind I get!” seems to be the common cry of rescuers everywhere.

We are like a team of janitors attempting to deal with a flooding sink in a locked broom closet by mopping the floor in the corridor because we can’t find the key to the door and we can’t break it down! We are dealing with one crisis after another and have no apparent hope of getting to the source of the problem.

So how can we get further ahead when most of us are already working as hard as we can, running only on adrenaline much of the time?

The answer lies in working smarter, not harder. That is where a community assessment and plan comes in. An assessment will help to identify the gaps in our efforts to end the homeless pet problem. A plan can help us set goals and stay focused on where we want to go.

The questions that stop so many before they even start are: “How do we begin? Do we need a paid staff and state-of-the-art facility? Do we need millions of dollars?” Staff, a shelter, and money help, of course, but you don’t necessarily need them to end the killing of healthy animals. What you need is the initiative to take the first step – a commitment to step outside the way things have always been done to develop and promote innovative and proactive programs to save animal lives.

## **Now that you've taken that step....**

Welcome to the beginning of your journey on the path to creating a No More Homeless Pets plan in your community. To help you, Best Friends has developed this workbook to be your guide and focus your resources and energy. This publication is intended for all individuals and groups interested in creating a time when every animal is guaranteed a loving home and there are no more unwanted, homeless pets in their community.

Let's start with a few basic questions and definitions.

### **What is "No More Homeless Pets" and what are the goals of the campaign?**

Animal lovers have long dreamed of a time when there would be no more homeless pets. Here at Best Friends, the nation's largest sanctuary for abused and abandoned animals, we are confident that the dream can become a reality within the next 10 years.

Working with the growing number of animal welfare organizations that share this goal, Best Friends has developed the No More Homeless Pets campaign. It's a broad-based network of animal lovers – animal organizations, rescue groups, shelters, businesses and individuals – who work cooperatively to end the destruction of healthy animals in the U.S., and who find loving, permanent homes for unwanted animals.

### **What is community assessment and planning?**

A community assessment defines the gaps between where you are currently as a community in regard to reaching the reality of no more homeless pets and where you want to be. To close these gaps, you must look at what services are already being offered by all organizations, evaluate the need for further services, set goals, and get started! The community plan helps you to stay focused on your goals and measure your progress.

We are focusing on community assessment and planning instead of focusing on a single organization because we are all in this process together. Animal welfare involves practically every segment of society – the general public, municipalities, public health departments, public safety officials, the military, animal shelters, veterinarians, rescue groups, and the animals themselves. It is important to include all of these segments when developing programs.

You may find that doing an assessment and creating a plan helps to solve more than just the homeless pets problem. By correlating data from the steps, you may find that you have been able to address additional issues, such as public health and safety.

## **Why do community assessment and planning?**

If you don't know specifically where you are or how to measure your impact, how can you know what still needs to be done and the best way to do it? You wouldn't want to spend all your time and money on a program promoting the adoption of puppies when the majority of animals needing homes in your community are older dogs.

By doing community assessment and planning, you'll be able to identify the greatest area(s) of need and create programs that address these needs. Rather than continuing to spend a great deal of your resources on reacting to animals coming into your shelters, you will be able to develop preventative programs to stop them from entering in the first place and to get those that do enter out alive. Armed with the results of your community assessment, you can reach out to the community and offer advance solutions. By so doing, you gain credibility, enhance public support and, most importantly, save more lives.

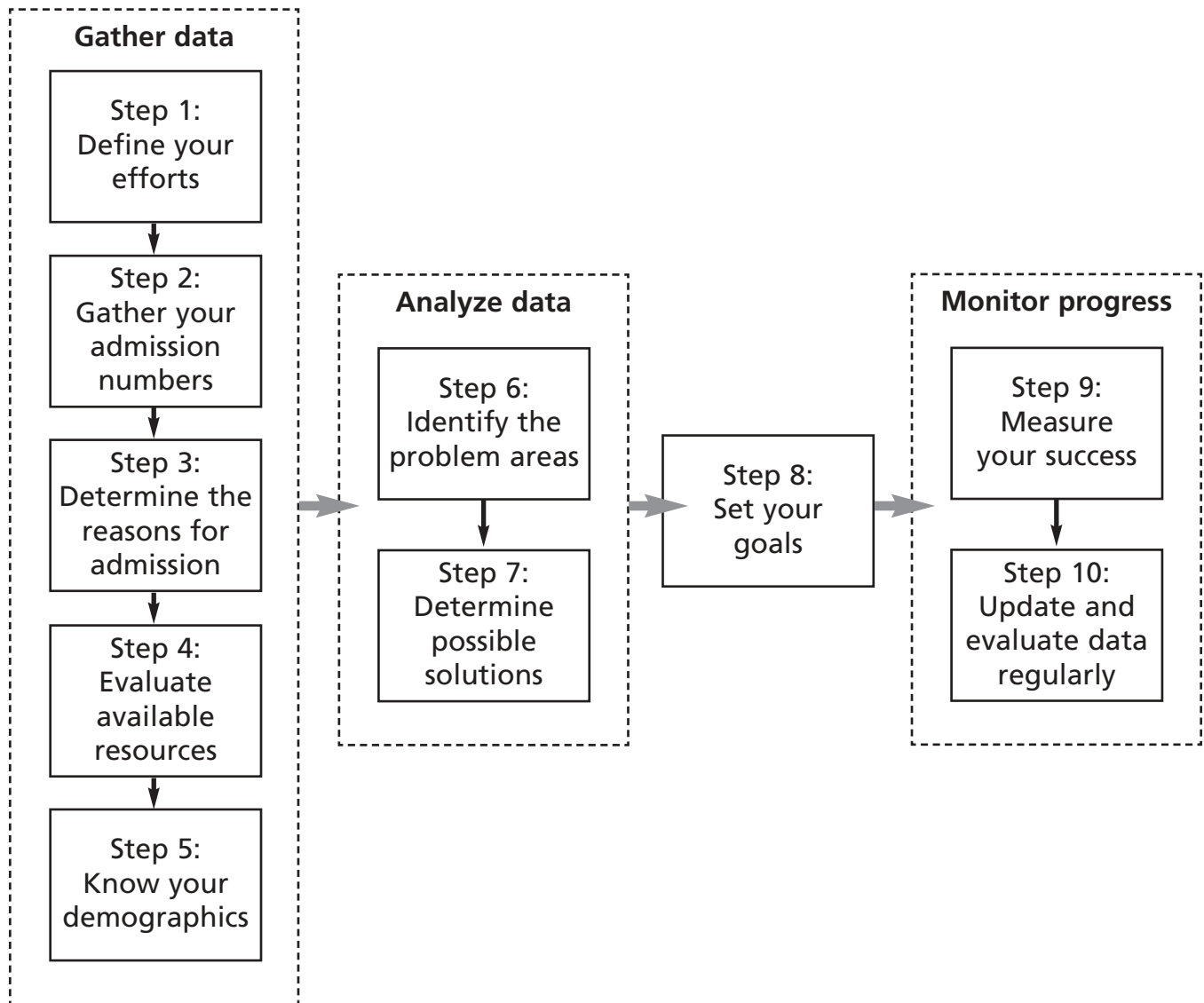
## **How much time is involved in community assessment and planning?**

That depends on how detailed you wish to get. Our workbook describes a simple 10-step process. If you wish to go further in-depth by doing community surveys, phone interviews, and other information gathering, the process will be longer. See the resources section at the back of this workbook for a list of nonprofits that can help you do a more detailed analysis.

## **How is a community assessment and plan done?**

The process of conducting an assessment proceeds in steps, with the results of one step affecting and helping to shape the next. It's not an entirely linear process; some of the steps will overlap. This workbook will guide you through the basic process. Steps 1–5 act as building blocks, where you gather all the necessary information that you will use in Steps 6–10 to define the problem, develop solutions, and set measurable goals. The following page contains an illustration of the process.

# Step by Step: Community Assessment and Planning



## STEP 1: Define Your Efforts by Categorizing the Animals



**Y**ou have probably heard of and maybe even used some of the following terms to define the animals in your care: healthy, treatable, non-rehabilitatable, feral. But, do the animal welfare organizations in your community keep accurate records of how many of each of these types of animals they deal with? Why is it necessary to categorize animals when we want to save them all? Isn't this excluding some animals from care?

We categorize animals because we believe it is essential for creating strategies and allocating resources to save lives. Categorizing animals in the context of a community assessment has nothing to do with determining which animals are adoptable or not in order to manipulate kill-rate statistics.

We categorize animals solely for the purpose of figuring out what types of programs are needed to better serve the animals coming into the system. Different problems have different solutions, and you can't know what the solutions are until you have a clear understanding of exactly what the problems are.

First, the animal welfare organizations in your community should decide on common definitions of what these terms mean. The following are sample definitions from Maddie's Fund, San Francisco SPCA (SFSPCA), and Tompkins County SPCA in New York. These are widely accepted definitions, but they may not work for your community. Choose the definitions that best fit your needs or create your own.

### Healthy

**Maddie's Fund:** Animals eight weeks of age or older that at, or subsequent to, the time the animal is impounded or otherwise taken into possession, have manifested no sign of a behavioral or temperamental defect that could pose a health or safety risk or otherwise make the animal unsuitable for placement as a pet, and have manifested no sign of disease, injury, or congenital or hereditary condition that adversely affects the health of the animal or that is likely to adversely affect the animal's health in the near future.

These dogs and cats may be older. They may be deaf, blind, scarred, disfigured, or disabled. They don't have to win a beauty contest. And it doesn't matter how long they may spend in a shelter or how many others are the same age, color, size, or type. As long as they are healthy, friendly pets, they're adoptable. (Maddie's Fund also refers to this category as "adoptable.")

**Tompkins County SPCA:** Weaned dogs and cats who at, or subsequent to, the time they are impounded or otherwise taken into possession, have manifested no sign of a behavioral or temperamental defect that could pose a health or safety risk or otherwise make the animal unsuitable for place-

ment as a pet, and have manifested no sign of disease, injury, congenital or hereditary condition that adversely affects the health of the animal, or that is likely to adversely affect the animal's health in the future.

**SFSPCA:** Dogs and cats who are friendly at eight weeks of age or older, and do not require foster, medical or behavioral treatment. These animals don't win a beauty contest. They may be 10 years of age, or even older. They may be deaf, blind, or disabled. And it doesn't matter how long they spend in our shelter, how much space we have, or how many others are the same age, color, size, or type. The definition is based solely on the physical and behavioral health of the animals. (SFSPCA also refers to this category as "adoptable," but they are switching more to "healthy.")

## Treatable

**Maddie's Fund:** Any animal that is not adoptable (healthy) but could become adoptable (healthy) with reasonable effort. Sick, injured, traumatized, underage, and unsocialized, these animals need appropriate medical treatment, behavior modification, and/or infant housing and care before they can be placed in new, loving homes.

**Tompkins County SPCA:** Any animal who is not healthy but who could become healthy with reasonable effort. Whether an animal is "treatable" is determined by balancing four primary factors: (1) diagnosis, (2) prognosis, (3) painful rehabilitation or otherwise suffering, and (4) length of rehabilitation.

**SFSPCA:** Animals who are under-aged, sick and/or injured, and who need medical or behavior treatment, and who can be treated with reasonable efforts.

## Non-rehabilitatable

**Maddie's Fund:** Non-rehabilitatable animals are neither adoptable (healthy) nor treatable. They include (1) dogs and cats for whom euthanasia is the most humane alternative due to disease, injury, or suffering that can't be alleviated; (2) vicious dogs and cats, the placement of whom would constitute a danger to the public; and (3) dogs and cats who pose a public health hazard.

**Tompkins County SPCA:** Any animal with a condition or behavior with poor prognosis or a condition that is not curable even if the animal has a fair quality of life but requires lifetime maintenance or care.

**SFSPCA:** Includes animals for whom euthanasia is currently the only option. These are animals who are suffering from incurable, painful conditions and vicious animals.

## Feral cats

**Maddie's Fund** and **SFSPCA** do not have this category, but both advocate humane feral cat management.

**Tompkins County SPCA:** A cat undersocialized or not socialized to people. Tompkins County does not call feral cats “non-rehabilitatable” because they occupy their own category, since they require an altogether different type of intervention by the organization to save their lives.

An organization’s staff must carefully and honestly evaluate each animal as an individual to decide which category the animal falls into. It is not enough for one staff member to look at a frightened dog or cat and decide the animal does not fit the definition of “healthy” or “treatable.” 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.

Organizations should not mislead the public by unfairly placing animals in treatable or non-rehabilitatable categories just so they can say that they do not kill large numbers of healthy animals. These categories are meant to be baselines to improve upon, not a strategy to justify euthanasia by labeling animals as non-rehabilitatable.

There are other ways in which the use of terms can be detrimental to your organization’s overall goal of saving lives. For instance, it can be very divisive if one group in a community calls themselves “no-kill” and shuns open-admission shelters because they aren’t no-kill. In most cases, no-kill shelters stop accepting animals when they are full, and the burden falls to open-admission shelters, which accept all surplus animals and end up killing some because of lack of space. Think in terms of the entire community working together to save more animal lives, rather than pitting one organization against another in a battle over who’s no-kill and who’s not.

In fact, the term “no-kill” isn’t even that clear-cut. Here’s how Maddie’s Fund, Tompkins County SPCA, and SFSPCA define the term:

## **No-kill**

**Maddie’s Fund:** “No-kill” does not mean that no animals die in the shelter. In our view, a no-kill community is one in which all healthy and treatable animals, including feral cats, are saved.

**Tompkins County SPCA:** “No-kill” does not mean that no animals die in the shelter. In our view, a no-kill community is one where all healthy and treatable animals, including feral cats, are saved. We don’t use the term “euthanasia” because euphemisms make the task of killing easier.

**SFSPCA:** “No-kill” rhetoric creates unrealistic expectations of what shelter systems can achieve. We need a clearer expression of our goals. We need to talk about real numbers, not semantics. We need unambiguous ways to assess the impact of our work. Accordingly, we are focusing less on the term “no-kill” and more on measurable achievements, including euthanasia rate, save rate, and shelter admission rate, which reflect the number of animals at risk. These are objective, verifiable outcomes that clearly document San Francisco’s success in saving homeless animals.

## **What if a shelter decides not to differentiate between categories of animals?**

Let's say that 2,000 dogs and cats died in shelters in a sample community. Imagine that the community does not categorize the animals and instead decides that there are simply "too many animals and not enough homes." In order to open up more homes, the shelter begins opening on the weekends, advertising available animals, setting up mobile adoption sites, and advocating for pet-friendly rental policies.

But what if 900 of the animals dying are neo-natal kittens and puppies with no mothers? Mobile adoption will not help these animals – they need bottle feedings and foster care before they are ready to be placed in permanent homes.

Let's say another 600 are feral cats. These cats cannot be placed in homes, so advertising, mobile adoption, and pet-friendly policies will not help them. What they need are programs to help keep them out of the shelter in the first place – low-cost spay/neuter and community advocacy for feral cats.

In the end, the programs the community started would only be of immediate benefit to 500 healthy dogs and cats. These solutions would exclude neo-natal puppies and kittens and feral cats.

If the community instead decides to categorize these animals dying in their shelters, they would know which programs will best address those animals' needs and how much in resources to allocate to those programs.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Adapted from SFSPCA publications

## STEP 2: Gather Your Admission Numbers



**T**he next step is to record and examine your organization's admission numbers. You may already gather these statistics, but it is important to know what to do with the data after you've collected it. Have you ever been proud because you have done a public survey about your organization's services or gathered data on the number of animals you adopted last year, but you have no idea what to do with that data now that you have it, and it gathers dust in a filing cabinet? There is no point in collecting data if you don't know how to use it to help you direct your resources efficiently and effectively toward programs that stop the killing of healthy animals in your community.

You don't need to have an expensive or complicated computer program to do this – you can do it in a simple Excel spreadsheet or use the sample form that we have created for you. Keeping records on a computer can make it easier, but it is not necessary if you don't have access to one.

Begin by keeping track of how many animals your organization takes in and what happens to them. Track admissions on a monthly basis, using categories like these:

- Impounded
- Adopted
- Reclaimed
- Euthanized
- Transferred (to other shelters or rescues)

Next, try to get all other animal-welfare organizations in your community to use a standard form. On the following page is an example of a form that can be used for admission data. Make copies for each organization to use and offer to be the one who will compile the totals.

A standard form makes it possible for all groups to report numbers in the same way. Otherwise, you may not be able to get a clear and true picture. For example, a shelter may transfer an animal to a rescue organization and count that animal in their adoption numbers. If the rescue organization also counts the animal as adopted, it results in a double counting.

Establish your baseline year (a 12-month period) for data. Then, when you start implementing changes in your programs, you'll be able to measure your progress. If some groups in your community are hesitant about participating in this process, assure them that their information will not be used to single them out in a negative manner. Tell them the information will only be used to get an idea of how many animals are currently being handled in the community and to set goals to reduce the number of animals entering shelters. If an organization prefers not to participate in the process, try to get their basic admission numbers anyway.

## Worksheet #1 Sample Admission Form

Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of animals over 6 months of age: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of dogs accepted: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of cats accepted: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of animals under 6 months of age: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of puppies: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of kittens: \_\_\_\_\_

	Dogs	Cats
Number reclaimed	_____	_____
Number adopted	_____	_____
Number euthanized	_____	_____

Do not include in adoption numbers:

Total number of dogs transferred: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of cats transferred: \_\_\_\_\_

You can also use computer software programs to input and organize this data, and any other categories you choose, on a daily basis. For example, the Toledo Area Humane Society in Ohio used Report Writer to create a format for entering the data they need to report to donors and supporters, such as numbers of animals handled and what happened to them, cruelty impounds, and off-site adoption numbers. Front-office employees run the report monthly.

If you do not have this data already collected, or easily accessible, work on creating such a format. In the meantime, contact other sources in the community that might deal with animal calls, such as the police, the fire department, the mayor's office, and veterinarians. Do they receive animal calls? How many? What is the nature of the calls? Knowing the answers to these questions can help determine where to allocate your resources. If, for instance, the fire department gets many calls about stray cats, but there is no agency in town that deals with stray cats, you may want to address that issue.

## STEP 3: Why Are They Here? Determine the Reasons for Admission



To help prioritize your efforts, you should record not only how many animals are taken in, but also why these animals are entering. Are the majority of animals entering your organization puppies and kittens? Then your community may need a spay/neuter and public awareness campaign. If a large percentage of animals enter because of behavioral issues, then perhaps you need to set up a behavior hotline or training classes.

You can gather this information through a number of different methods:

- Interviews with individual staff
- Group interviews with staff and departments
- Questionnaires (for staff to fill out at admission or public surveys for volunteers, adopters, and those surrendering an animal)
- Work records/reports (can include cruelty reports, surrender records, phone logs, monthly admission reports)

Choose which method(s) will work best for your group, but you probably will want one formal, accurate method of recording this information.

Again, develop a standard form for reporting admission and euthanasia reasons, and encourage all humane organizations in the community to use it. Gathering similar information will allow the humane community to consistently monitor why animals are entering their organizations and note any changing trends.

A shelter coalition in New Hampshire recognized the importance of using the same form to collect data, so they devised a monthly tracking sheet for all shelters to use. Their compiled data showed that the group they needed to focus services on was low-income pet owners. They created a statewide affordable and accessible spay/neuter program funded by a \$2 surcharge on dog license fees. As a result, New Hampshire has the lowest euthanasia rate per 1,000 people in the country (2.5 per 1,000).

A modified version of the New Hampshire tracking sheet appears on the next page. To ensure correct data and reduce duplication, impounding facilities that are used by more than one municipality only complete one summary form, and include combined totals in each category from each of the municipalities for which they contract.

## Worksheet #2

### Monthly Tracking Sheet: Reasons for Animal Admission

	Dogs	Puppies	Cats	Kittens	Misc.	TOTAL
<b>Reason that the animal was surrendered by the owner:</b>						
Moving: landlord denied						
Temperament, aggression, biting						
Not housebroken, litter box problems						
Allergies						
Doesn't get along with other pets						
Cannot afford						
Too much animal, too much work						
Too many animals						
Sick						
Death of owner						
New baby						
Divorce						
Other						
TOTAL Surrendered by owner						
<b>Reasons that the adopted animal was returned:</b>						
Moving/landlord denial						
Temperament, aggression, biting						
Not housebroken, litter box problems						
Allergies						
Doesn't get along with other pets						
Not enough time for pet						
Cannot afford						
Too much animal, too much work						
Too many animals						
Sick						

	Dogs	Puppies	Cats	Kittens	Misc.	TOTAL
Death of owner						
New baby						
Divorce						
Other						
TOTAL Adoption return						
<b>Reason that the animal was euthanized:</b>						
Sick: URI, HW+, FeLV+, FIV+, all others						
Aggressive: biting, aggression toward people or animals, questionable or unsafe temperament						
Behavior problems: not house-broken or not using litter box, separation anxiety, unsocialized, etc.						
Age: too young or too old						
Feral						
Space/overcrowding						
Owner request						
Vicious dog classification						
Cruelty case						
Injured						
Died under treatment						
Other						
TOTAL Euthanized						
TOTAL Stray admissions						
TOTAL Cruelty admissions						
TOTAL Incoming animals						

Each community can devise its own list of categories and make them as detailed or as basic as needed. For instance, you might want to break down the “Sick” category to track animals that are sick on arrival and animals that become sick during their shelter stay. If you live in a large community or city, you might want to track which part of town an animal is arriving from. Such information could be helpful in determining what programs are needed and where they are needed most.

The New Hampshire coalition also keeps track of the percentages of animals handled, adopted, returned, surrendered, reclaimed, and euthanized. The worksheet below will help you calculate your organization’s own percentages. You will need to use data gathered from Step 2. Knowing these percentages will help you set measurable goals for your community later on.

### **Worksheet #3**

### **Calculating Percentages**

$$\frac{[\text{Total \# of incoming animals}] - [\text{reclaimed strays}]}{[\text{\# of animals in shelter system}]} =$$

$$\frac{[\text{\# of reclaimed animals}]}{[\text{\# of strays}]} \times 100 = \text{reclaim rate (\%)}$$

$$\frac{[\text{\# of adopted animals}]}{[\text{\# of animals in shelter system}]} \times 100 = \text{adoption rate (\%)}$$

$$\frac{[\text{\# of euthanized animals}]}{[\text{\# of animals in shelter system}]} \times 100 = \text{euthanasia rate (\%)}$$

$$\frac{[\text{\# of animals surrendered by owner}]}{[\text{total \# of incoming animals}]} \times 100 = \text{owner surrender rate (\%)}$$

$$\frac{[\text{\# of adoption returns within 6 months}]}{[\text{\# of adoptions}]} \times 100 = \text{adoption return rate}$$

## STEP 4: It Takes a Community... Evaluate Available Resources



**L**ooking at why animals end up in a shelter can help you prioritize what areas to focus on. The next step is to find out if there are services already being offered in your community that address these needs. If so, why aren't they being used? If not, perhaps you need to create a new approach or programs.

When you do a little research, you may be surprised to find services that you didn't know about. One group was thinking about starting a low-cost spay/neuter program and began approaching veterinarians for support. They were surprised to discover that there were already several spay/neuter clinics in their community, but they were not being fully used. The problem was that they were not publicized widely.

So, sometimes what is needed is not a new program, but a way to support, promote and/or expand available programs. Or, the problem may be that the needs of the public aren't met by available services and programs. For example, you may have instituted a spay/neuter voucher program for low-income people by advertising it on your website. But, if most of the low-income people in your area are Spanish-speaking and the majority of them don't know about your website, you may not be reaching these people.

Too often in the humane movement, the public is seen as the enemy who abandons animals or disposes of them in shelters without much thought about their fate. To end the homeless pet problem, the shelter community must stop looking at the public in an adversarial way, and instead encourage the public to become a partner. Looking at existing services and programs from the public's perspective will help you identify potential voids and gaps and create an understanding of how you can better serve the community.

The questions below will help you to evaluate in detail the existing services and programs in your community. Again, if certain groups balk at providing this information, tell them that the information will not be used to reflect negatively on them, but rather will be used to benefit the entire community.

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### Adoptions

Look at the adoption efforts of all humane organizations in the community, including non-sheltered groups such as foster homes and breed rescue.

1. Are their hours of operation convenient for the public? Are they open only during normal work hours or are there after-work and weekend hours?
2. Are their adoption policies easy to understand? Is the adoption screening process complicated?
3. Are there off-site adoption programs in the community? How often and where? Are they located in heavily traveled areas and are they centrally located? Do they cover all areas of the community or just one corner?

4. Do they hold super adoptions or collaborative adoption events where many groups participate?
5. Are the groups well-defined – in other words, is the public aware of each of their roles and missions? Taking each group individually, how are animals publicized for adoption?
6. Are there foster homes or networks available for members of the public who find or need to place neo-natal puppies or kittens? Are there foster homes available for people who might need help placing an animal or holding an animal temporarily?
7. Is the community made aware of national programs such as Home 4 the Holidays, Shelter Animal Appreciation Week, and Be Kind to Animals Week? If yes, which ones?
8. Are adopters offered any training programs for animals they adopt from organizations? Are they offered any follow-up care?
9. Are adopters offered a first free vet appointment with participating vets?
10. Are adopters given a shelter ID tag?
11. If adopters don't receive sterilized animals, are adopters given spay/neuter subsidies or discount vouchers when adopting intact cats or dogs?

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## **Sterilization**

1. Do adopters receive sterilized animals? Do adopters of puppies and kittens receive sterilized animals? At what age/weight are animals sterilized?
2. If adopters do not receive sterilized animals, are they given some form of assistance like vouchers or discounts?
3. Are there spay/neuter clinics or services available to the public? Are any price-subsidized?
4. Are there affordable spay/neuter assistance programs for low-income pet caretakers (e.g., with a co-payment of \$10–20, which includes all non-surgical costs, such as presurgical immunizations and exam fees)? Are these programs accessible to the neighborhoods where low-income people reside? If not, is transportation provided to get people and their pets to participating veterinary clinics? Are these programs fully funded so that everyone who is eligible can participate?

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## **Veterinarians**

1. Are veterinarians partnering with humane organizations to promote spay/neuter to the community? Do they offer any surgeries at a subsidized cost? If so, who qualifies?
2. Are any vet offices doing adoptions (for clients who find strays, for example, or for humane organizations)?
3. How many veterinarians will accept feral cats for surgery?

4. How many veterinarians will do pediatric spay/neuter? At what age/weight? Do veterinarians routinely recommend sterilizing kittens and puppies early enough to avoid unintended first litters (i.e., before the kitten or puppy is five months old)? Do they regularly recommend this at the first office visit when they give the kitten or puppy shots?
5. What is the average cost per surgery in your community?
6. How many veterinarians offer microchip service?

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## Health departments

1. Are there any efforts to curb rabies or other animal-related health problems (such as rabies clinics, a task force that meets to discuss issues, oral vaccine drops for wildlife, a feral cat TNR program with health department participation)?
2. Is there an effective bite reporting/quarantine procedure?
3. Are there any bite prevention programs in place?
4. Are there any other public education programs related to animal issues?

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## Microchips

1. Which humane organizations in the community microchip?
2. Is this required for all animals adopted from humane organizations? Is it provided as an additional service?
3. Do all groups have a universal scanner to check for microchips? Do they use it?
4. Are microchip clinics provided for the public and, if so, are they promoted by humane organizations?

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## Community involvement

1. How many volunteers does each humane organization have? How many volunteer hours are provided?
2. Are there partnerships between any humane organizations and businesses/organizations in the community? For what projects (e.g., financial assistance, volunteer help, event sponsorship)?
3. Is the community given a forum (and encouraged) to provide feedback on the animal services available and their level of awareness of and satisfaction with these services? Through what methods?
4. What media outlets (e.g., radio, TV, print, Internet) are used to promote the services of humane organizations?
5. What humane education programs exist for the community? How many children/adults are reached?

---

## **Feral cat assistance**

1. What are humane organizations' responses when the public calls for assistance with feral cats?
2. Are the animals ignored, euthanized, relocated, or sterilized and returned?
3. If there are groups that assist with feral cats, do other humane organizations know about these groups and do they refer the public to these groups for assistance?
4. Are traps available for loan?
5. Are sterilization services available for feral/stray cats? What is the cost?
6. What programs and resources are available for feral cat caretakers or those feeding stray cats?

---

## **Keeping pets in their homes**

1. What programs are offered by humane organizations to the public to help animals stay with their owners? Behavioral programs/classes? Spay/neuter assistance? Listings for pet-friendly housing rentals?
2. Are adopters offered a free or discounted first vet exam for their new pet?

---

## **Other services**

1. What services are provided to the public by humane organizations? (Some examples are cruelty investigations, pickup of sick/injured animals, behavior/obedience programs, subsidized spay/neuter services, humane education presentations, etc.)

---

## **Legislation**

1. Is there companion-animal legislation in the community (such as pet limit laws, cat licensing, mandatory public or shelter spay/neuter policies, vicious dog laws, a ban on feeding stray cats)?
2. Has the impact of the legislation been monitored and tracked? Is there a positive or negative impact?
3. Has your community established publicly funded spay/neuter assistance programs for low-income pet caretakers, shelter adopters, and feral cats?

## STEP 5: Know Your Demographics



**Y**ou are halfway there. You have a few more pieces of data to collect before you begin using the information gathered to define and develop solutions. Up until this point, you have been looking at animal numbers. Now you are going to look at people numbers.

When you start to create programs, you'll need to know your community and target audience so that you know what message will make sense to the people you are trying to reach.

For example, if you have been offering a spay/neuter program but people are not taking advantage of the service, you need to find out WHY. Do people not know about the program? Are there cultural issues? A lack of understanding about what spay/neuter means? Perhaps some people believe that sterilizing an animal hurts the animal, or that neutering takes away the male dog's "manhood." Do not assume that the service is not needed. It may just need to be marketed better or targeted more accurately to the audience.

To help with this, you need to know the demographics of your audience. Start by looking at basic socioeconomic factors:

- Population of the target area
- Area poverty level and what percentage of people live below this level
- Area with the highest number of animal control complaints (e.g., dogs running at large, bites, strays)
- Ethnic makeup
- Population shifts and changes

Here's why you need to collect each of these pieces of information:

- Looking at the population of your target area will help later when you develop a measuring tool for the progress of your programs.
- Knowing the area poverty level and what percentage of people live below this level can help you decide what amount of funding will be needed to make sure that everyone who is eligible for assistance can receive it. It can also help you identify the neighborhoods or areas where you will need to ensure that the program is readily accessible.
- Finding the area with the most animal control complaints can be a determining factor in targeting programs for animal bites, animal safety, and responsible pet care to certain high-risk areas.
- Understanding the ethnic makeup of an area can help you as you develop materials to promote a program or campaign. For example, if the area is largely Hispanic, you may want to offer both English and Spanish versions.

- Knowing about population shifts and changes will help when evaluating your admission numbers and the success of programs. A large influx of people moving into a target area may affect the number of animals entering your organization.

All this data can be found by going to [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov). You can search by:

- Clicking on American Fact Finder on the lefthand side of the screen (which gives you more detailed information)
- Clicking on State and County Quick Facts on the righthand side

## Worksheet #4 Demographics of Our Area for the Year \_\_\_\_\_

Name of target area: \_\_\_\_\_

Population of target area: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of area (neighborhood, street, city): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Area poverty level: \_\_\_\_\_%

Percentage of people below poverty level: \_\_\_\_\_%

Zip code or street with highest number of animal control complaints per year: \_\_\_\_\_

Record the number of the following complaints for the year \_\_\_\_\_:

Dog bites \_\_\_\_\_

Dogs running at large \_\_\_\_\_

Stray cats \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnic makeup:

Caucasian \_\_\_\_\_%

Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_%

African American \_\_\_\_\_%

Asian American \_\_\_\_\_%

Native American \_\_\_\_\_%

Other \_\_\_\_\_%

Describe any population shifts or changes over the past \_\_\_ years:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Either option will allow you to search by state, county, zip code, city, or town. In addition to the socioeconomic data suggested above, there is a wealth of other demographic information you may find useful.

If you are not Internet-savvy, you can call your local library and ask for population and demographic data for your area. In most communities, your local library can locate this information for you or refer you to the correct resource. Once you have gathered your statistics, enter them on the worksheet on the previous page.

One example of how certain factors may play a role in targeting your programs: Tompkins County SPCA in upstate New York serves as both the humane society and animal control. By doing an analysis of their data, they found that poorer, rural areas had a higher number of animals and complaint calls. In response, the SPCA gave their humane officer sterilization coupons to hand out in those areas. Because they keep monthly statistics, they can easily track if the number of complaints goes down in the targeted areas.

By the way, the easiest way to ensure that people qualify for a low-income program is to use Medicaid eligibility as a screening tool. This is a pre-established, national guideline for qualifying persons of low income. Veterinarians in your area may be more inclined to work with a program that uses these accepted guidelines.

## **Determining rates per 1,000 people**

Your goals (Step 8) will be based on what effect you can have on the number of animals impounded, sterilized, and euthanized. You can use the demographic information you have been gathering to figure out the impound, sterilization and euthanasia rates based on 1,000 people.

Using rates based on 1,000 people gives you more accurate information about fluctuations in these rates over time. For example, suppose you don't base your rates on the percentage per 1,000 people. You implement a very successful spay/neuter campaign – the number of surgeries is high – but your impound rate isn't going down. One possible reason could be that there's been a corresponding increase in the population of people and, consequently, an increase in the number of pets.

Also, figuring the rates based on 1,000 people will allow you to make more accurate comparisons across regions (counties, for instance). Your statistics will be less skewed if you want to compare, say, the euthanasia rate in a densely populated area with the rate in a rural area.

Just for comparison purposes, the national average for euthanasias per 1,000 people is 14.8, according to 2000–2002 data compiled by *Animal People* (or 15.3 per 1,000 people if you add in the 1999 data).

How do you figure out the rates per 1,000 people? The worksheet below shows you how to determine your euthanasia rate per 1,000 people. You can figure the rate on a quarterly or annual basis, depending on how often you want to collect statistics. Determine the impoundment and sterilization rates in the same way. These rates will give you baselines that will be useful when you are setting your goals (Step 8).

## Worksheet #5

$$\frac{[\text{total population}]}{1,000} = P$$

$$\frac{[\text{\# of animals euthanized}]}{[P]} = \text{euthanasia rate per 1,000 people}$$

### Example:

$$\frac{54,957}{1,000} = 54.957$$

$$\frac{685}{54.957} = 12.46 \text{ (euthanasia rate per 1,000 people)}$$

## Determining feral-cat numbers

Setting goals for management of feral cats can be especially challenging because it's difficult to know the number of cats in the community, feral or otherwise. If you are trying to set goals for TNR, but are having a difficult time coming up with how many cats must be trapped, there is a simple formula to give you a rough estimate:

1. First, figure out the total number of households in your community. Take the human population and divide by 2.67 (the average number of people per household estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2000). For example, suppose your community has a population of 54,957. To estimate the number of households in the community, divide 54,957 by 2.67. The result is 20,583 households.

2. Then, figure out the approximate number of pet cats in the community by multiplying the number of households by .66 (this number was determined using national figures).<sup>2</sup> So, using our example, the approximate number of pet cats in this community is:

$$20,583 \text{ households} \times .66 = 13,585 \text{ pet cats}$$

3. It has been estimated that, before any spay/neuter programs are implemented, feral cats equal about 40% of the total cat population.<sup>3</sup> (Please note that this is only a very rough ballpark figure.) So, to get a loose estimate of the feral-cat population, take the number of pet cats in your community (the number you determined above) and multiply by .4 (which is the equivalent of 40%). Using our example, the estimated number of feral cats is:

$$13,585 \text{ pet cats} \times .4 = 5,434 \text{ feral cats}$$

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<sup>2</sup>Source: *AVMA U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook*, 2002  
[www.avma.org/membshp/marketstats/formulas.asp](http://www.avma.org/membshp/marketstats/formulas.asp)

<sup>3</sup>Source: Merritt Clifton, *Animal People*, [www.animalpeoplenews.org](http://www.animalpeoplenews.org)

## STEP 6: Identify the Problem Areas



**Y**ou have looked at the resources available and gathered your data. Now you must identify the problem areas, the ones that need attention first.

Begin examining your data. The following worksheet might be helpful. There is no one-size-fits-all formula for developing solutions to the homeless pets problem. Each community will have different problem areas, and therefore, different solutions. The data you have collected will help you determine where to focus your efforts.

### Worksheet #6 Data Summary

Write your top 3 reasons that animals are:

Impounded

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Euthanized

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Transfer your percentages from Worksheet #3:

Number of animals in the shelter system: \_\_\_\_\_

Reclaim rate \_\_\_\_\_ %

Adoption rate \_\_\_\_\_ %

Euthanasia rate \_\_\_\_\_ %

Surrender rate \_\_\_\_\_ %

Adoption return rate \_\_\_\_\_ %

Because these rates vary dramatically across the nation based on geography, culture, population, and how the statistics were initially gathered, it's not that helpful to compare your percentages to national averages. Instead, we suggest that you use these rates as a baseline when you set your goals (see Step 8). You might also want to figure some of your rates based on human population (see Step 5) and use those numbers as a baseline.

Do any of the rates stand out as alarmingly high or low? If so, then that's the area you should target first. For instance, if you only have a 2% reclaim rate on lost animals, your community might want to create and promote a unified lost-and-found system for the public, or develop microchipping clinics and encourage the public to ID their animals. Looking at your data, what other areas need work? Make a list.

At this point, you may feel that analyzing your data has given you enough information for you to define the problem areas in your community and develop solutions. But, if you feel you need further information, you could hold focus groups and brainstorming sessions.

If you want outside input, you could invite the public, members of different humane organizations, or leaders from different civic organizations to a facilitated discussion. Or, you could do a public survey. One helpful resource is a book called *Citizen Surveys: How to Do Them, How to Use Them, What They Mean*, from the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The book<sup>4</sup> covers everything from how to phrase questions in a clear and neutral manner to how to figure out what your data means.

The public ultimately influences every bit of data you have gathered, from admission numbers to adoption numbers, so their input could be crucial to your efforts. Providing a forum for their feedback helps further encourage collaboration to help solve the community problem of homeless pets.

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<sup>4</sup>You can order the book for \$45 from the ICMA by calling 800-745-8780 or accessing [www.bookstore.icma.org](http://www.bookstore.icma.org). Search for Item 42551.

## STEP 7: Determine Possible Solutions



**N**ext, you should determine possible solutions based on which problem area needs attention first. Try to find correlations between your admission data, your community's current resources (or lack of them), and the community's demographics. Here are some ways to do that:

- Since the bottom line is reducing your euthanasia rate, try to find a link between the reasons that animals are impounded and euthanized, and the resources currently available (see Step 4). For example, if most of the animals being euthanized are feral cats, it may be because there is no management program such as trap/neuter/return (TNR) in the community.
- Compare your admission data to your demographics information. Are the majority of animals entering your organization as strays? If so, look at the area with the most animal control complaints for animals running at large and target an educational and identification campaign in that area.
- Prioritize your efforts based on examining ALL of your data. If an alarming number of feral cats are being killed in your area shelters, don't just conclude that you need to start a TNR program right away. Look at your community resource data to find out if any programs already exist for feral cats and, if so, look at your demographic data to see if there are any clues as to why these programs aren't working.

When you're trying to come up with a solution to your problem, think about whether it affects your community in more ways than one. Demonstrating that the problem affects multiple segments of the community can help make the solution more "sellable" to local officials and the public. For example, if you identify feral cat management as an area of need, you may find that unsterilized feral cats are not just a population control issue. They may also be a public health and safety issue. The local health department may be supportive if a TNR program provides rabies shots to address the public health concern, and the public may support TNR if they know that sterilization cuts down on roaming, fighting, spraying and yowling.

Try to develop solutions with multiple benefits that the community can "buy into." You are building a foundation for future funding and public support, so it is important to show how and why the solution benefits the entire community.

We cannot tell you what will work best for your community. The last section of this workbook contains descriptions and contact information for some successful model programs if you would like to learn more about their efforts.

The most important thing is to pay attention to what your data is telling you. You may be surprised by what you find. Don't assume that you know what your community needs. If you are not targeting your programs to the areas of greatest need or to the right population group, you may be wasting resources.

In fact, according to public-funding expert Peter Marsh (creator of New Hampshire's successful statewide spay/neuter program), **for every dollar spent on a program, 75 cents could be wasted if it is not targeted!** If you target your programs accurately and tailor your message appropriately, the public will respond in a positive way and view you as an ally and resource because you are solving a seemingly intractable problem. As you start implementing solutions, your euthanasia, adoption return, and surrender rates will hopefully go down, while your adoption and reclaim rates will go up.

## Step 8: Set Your Goals

### Setting goals for feral-cat management

Because getting an accurate count of feral cats can be difficult (see Step 5 for a formula for getting an estimate), it can be a bit challenging to set measurable goals. You can monitor admission and euthanasia numbers in shelters that accept stray cats. After your feral cat program has been implemented for a while, are there any differences in the number of impounds? Has the euthanasia rate for cats decreased?

If no organizations in your community accept stray cats, examine the number of cat-related complaints from each humane group as well as public service agencies (such as the police, the fire department, the mayor's office, and the city council). Are cat-related complaint calls decreasing?

Once you have defined potential solutions, it's time to set specific goals for the future. Why do you need to set specific goals? Well, think about what would happen if you wanted to go on a trip, but you couldn't settle on where to go or when to go or how to get there. You would probably just end up staying home, right? Comparably, if you want to end the homeless pet problem in your community, but you don't have specific goals for how to make that happen, you probably won't get anywhere.

So, what is it that you want to accomplish? Be as specific as possible, since the more specific your goals are, the easier it will be to determine if you are reaching them. For example, "reduce the euthanasia rate by 20% over the next two years" is a more measurable goal than "end the killing of homeless pets."

The baseline rates that you established in Step 5 can be used for setting specific goals. After you have established a baseline rate, you can set specific goals for subsequent years. For example, Maddie's Pet Project in Alabama achieved 4.5 sterilization surgeries per 1,000 people in their first year<sup>5</sup> (along with a 7% decrease in shelter impoundments after years of increases). This statistic helped them set their goals for the next year.

There are four steps to setting and reaching a goal:

1. Identify your goal.
2. Make a plan to reach your goal.
3. Put your plan in motion.
4. Decide if your plan is working.<sup>6</sup>

Sounds fairly simple, right? But what if you have a big or long-term goal, like ending the euthanasia of healthy pets within five years? Break it down. Big goals are often made up of small, short-term goals. Accomplishing the smaller goals brings you closer to accomplishing the big goal. For example:

Long-Term Goal: End the euthanasia of healthy pets within five years

Short-Term Goal 1: Increase spay and neuter surgeries by 30% in one year

Short-Term Goal 2: Increase adoptions by 20% in one year

Short-Term Goal 3: Increase the number of foster homes by at least 30 every two years

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<sup>5</sup>Note that these surgeries were surgeries above baseline, which means they were those done in addition to the ones being done in vet hospitals.

<sup>6</sup>Adapted from "Career Planning" by Dawn Rosenberg McKay, <http://votech.about.com/library/weekly/aa041301b.htm>

Short-term goals are steps you take to get to where you want to be. Each goal – no matter how big or small – builds on your previous goals and accomplishments.

To give yourself the best possible chance of achieving your goals, keep the following in mind as you develop them:

- **Don't set goals that are impossible to achieve.** Make sure the goals you set are realistic and within your reach. For example, a goal to “end the killing of all animals in our community within six months” is probably unrealistic if you haven't done any research on how many animals are dying in your community or why, and you don't have any plan for increasing adoptions or spay/neuter.

- **Set goals that can be measured.** If your goal is to increase TNR of feral cats in your community, for example, set a specific number of spay/neuters as your goal and keep statistics on how many cats are fixed and returned.

- **Keep in mind the consequences (including unintended consequences) of goals.** For example, if you set a goal of mandatory spay/neuter for your community, be aware that shelters may be flooded initially with animals from people who can't afford sterilization services or don't want to pay. Be prepared with subsidiary programs to deal with this influx, such as free or subsidized surgeries for needy people and free transportation to clinics.

- **Tie at least one action to each goal.** For instance, if your five-year goal is to eliminate euthanasia of all healthy animals, then the actions tied to it would include the following: find out how many healthy animals you are currently handling and what is happening to them; look at what programs you currently have to promote your animals for adoption; figure out what new programs you will need and how you can reach out to the community to help; and figure out by what percentage you need to increase your adoptions.

- **Be flexible.** If you encounter barriers, don't give up on your goals. Instead, modify them to meet your current situation. However, if a particular goal is no longer important, then you should let it go; allow yourself to put your energy where it will be most effective. Don't be afraid to modify your goals or your plans.

- **Be patient.** Whether you are setting short- or long-term goals, make sure you have a reasonable timeline to achieve those goals. While we all want to get things done right now, not allowing enough time to achieve a goal is a setup for failure. Patience and planning will result in a successful outcome.

At left is a simple criteria test that each of your goals should meet. To set your goals, gather a group of key individuals together and have a brainstorming session. At the start of the session, make sure everyone is clear on the overall vision of your organization, the problems areas that you identified (in Step 6), and the potential solutions you have come up with (in Step 7). Make sure everyone has a copy of the criteria test (at left).

Then, brainstorm with the group on all possible goals. Write down all ideas, without evaluating and critiquing them. After the brainstorming session, review the goals one at time, using the criteria test, and eliminate the ones that don't meet the criteria.

**Your goal must be:**

**Conceivable:** You must be able to put it into words.

**Achievable:** You must have the attributes, energy, and time to accomplish it.

**Measurable:** You must be able to show progress toward your goal.

**Clearly defined:** You must know exactly what your goal is.

**Flexible:** You must be willing to modify it as necessary.<sup>6</sup>

Next, organize the goals based on the priorities that you established for the problem areas (Step 6). Decide to work on a certain number of goals (three, for instance) and keep the rest of the list to work on after you have met those goals. Make a list of action items that could be taken to achieve each goal. Use a simple worksheet like the one below.

**Worksheet #7**  
**Goals and Actions**

Goal 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Actions to help achieve the goal: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Goal 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Actions to help achieve the goal: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Goal 3: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Actions to help achieve the goal: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Step 9: Measure Your Success and Monitor Your Progress



**T**hirty years ago, one dog and cat in five lost his or her life in a shelter every year. Now, the number is one in 20. Our mission, however, is not to reduce overpopulation, but to end it.

To do that, we need to know where we came from, where we are now, and where we are going. It's especially important to know with accuracy where you are now. As you move forward with new programs, you must be able to accurately track your progress, or lack thereof. If your proposed solutions bring about measurable progress, you're on the right track. If not, you'll need to devise some new strategies.

### Measure your success

To make sure you are gathering accurate statistics, use the measurement tool (see Step 5) of figuring euthanasia and impound rates per 1,000 people. With this tool, you can accurately track whether your programs and strategies are having an effect. Your first set of data (where you are now) will serve as a baseline, which means that it will be used as a starting point. To find out whether your programs are working, you will compare your subsequent sets of data (collected at intervals later in time, after the program is in place) to your baseline data.

You are already familiar with how to figure out these rates (see Step 5), but here's a refresher:

$$\frac{[\text{total population}]}{1,000} = p$$

$$\frac{[\# \text{ of animals euthanized}]}{[P]} = \text{euthanasia rate per 1,000 people}$$

You can figure the rate on a quarterly or annual basis, depending on how often you want to collect data. Use the worksheet on the next page to track your euthanasia and impoundment rates over time.

Don't get discouraged if you don't see an immediate impact on your admission numbers. Reducing the homeless animal population can be compared to paying a mortgage. Merritt Clifton, editor of *Animal People* newspaper, developed this analogy: If you have ever paid off a mortgage, you know that paying the interest seems to take forever. Once you start paying off the principal, however, the remainder of the payoff is relatively rapid.

The same dynamic applies to halting and reversing pet overpopulation. If you are seeing any reduction at all in your shelter admission and euthanasia rates, you are at least keeping ahead of the "interest" on the unpaid debt of dogs and cats allowed to breed.

This tracking tool works in any community, whether small or large, urban or rural. Because you calculate the rates based on a fixed number of human

## Worksheet #8

Date	Impoundments per 1,000 People	% Increase or Decrease Over Baseline
_____	_____	(baseline)
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Date	Euthanasias per 1,000 People	% Increase or Decrease Over Baseline
_____	_____	(baseline)
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

residents, it shows true progress even if there is a large influx in the human population. Take the case of Texas, which had not seen more than a net reduction of 2% in animal shelter admissions over a 10-year period. But, the human population over that same period grew by 10%, so in reality, they were doing well to see any reduction at all in their admission rate.

### Case study: New Jersey

Tracking your data diligently can reveal where improvements could be made in your programs. For example, Peter Marsh (who created a statewide publicly funded spay/neuter program in New Hampshire) examined the New Jersey publicly funded neutering assistance program in relation to its effects on sterilization rates and impoundments. This is what he found:

- Between 1984 and 1998, impoundments in New Jersey dropped by 28%.
- During this same period, euthanasias in New Jersey shelters dropped by 35%.

While these are certainly admirable decreases, in 1998 the shelter euthanasia rate in the six poorest counties was almost four times higher than that of the five richest counties. If the other 16 counties could achieve the shelter

euthanasia rate of the five richest counties, New Jersey would have the lowest statewide euthanasia rate in the country.

This example clearly shows how using demographics and collecting accurate, specific data can make a huge difference in deciding where to focus your program efforts and funding. New Jersey is able to do a comprehensive analysis because the state has a solid data-collection system in place.

The New Jersey Department of Health collects data on the impoundment of stray and abandoned animals, and the disposition of these animals throughout the state each year. To ensure that the data is correct and to reduce duplication, impounding facilities that are used by more than one municipality only complete one summary form, which includes statistics from each of the municipalities for which they contract. They also ask for the total number of animals transferred from other shelters/pounds, from out of state and from within the state. This ensures that animals are not counted twice by multiple agencies.

The form records the number of animals handled, adopted, reclaimed, and euthanized. It also asks if agencies require spay/neuter. New Jersey conducts a yearly statistical analysis that can help gauge progress and show whether new goals are needed.

## Case study: New Hampshire

Like New Jersey, the state of New Hampshire is able to tell a lot from their data. New Hampshire's publicly funded statewide spay/neuter program is a successful model that has been tried and tested. But there wouldn't have been any proof that it was successful if the state hadn't tracked the appropriate data. Here are some of their specifics:

- In 1993, shelters killed 11,494 dogs and cats in New Hampshire; in 2000, shelters killed 2,575 dogs and cats.
- During that period of time (1993–2000), the New Hampshire program subsidized 29,546 spay/neuter surgeries.
- During that period of time, there were 37,210 fewer animal admissions than in the previous seven years (1985–1992).

New Hampshire's data led them to estimate that for every spay/neuter surgery performed in their program, they prevented 1.2 impoundments at local shelters over a seven-year period.

Because impounding and sheltering animals is expensive, the spay/neuter program has actually saved the state money! At an average cost<sup>7</sup> of \$105 to impound and shelter each animal, the savings on that alone totaled \$3.9 million. And the cost of the spay/neuter program has been only \$1.2 million.

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<sup>7</sup>New Hampshire estimated a cost of \$105 for handling each animal. According to a 1998 survey of 186 shelters done by John Wenstrup (Mercer Management Consulting, e-mail: john.wenstrup@mercercmc.com), the average cost per animal handled in those shelters was \$176.

So, every dollar spent on the program in its first seven years has saved \$3.15 in reduced impoundment costs so far. The total yearly cost of the New Hampshire low-income program has been less than 15 cents per resident.

Of course, there are other factors that could have played a role in New Hampshire's declining impound rate, but it is highly probable that the statewide sterilization program played a large role.

That brings up a good point: Always acknowledge that other factors can play a role in your efforts and use your statistics wisely. Do not inflate them or make them up so your successes will seem greater. This will only make you less credible to the public, whose support is so crucial. Developing a positive working relationship with the public and the community is vital to your success.

## **Review your goals**

Besides keeping an eye on your statistics, you should also review your goals periodically to see if they are being achieved. If they aren't, one of two things could be wrong: Your goals are too ambitious, or your programs and strategies are ineffective. If the former is true, you'll need to set more realistic goals (refer to Step 8 for advice on goal-setting). If the latter is true, you'll need to re-evaluate your programs to figure out why they aren't effective and make the necessary changes. What factors could be influencing whether you are reaching your goals – population demographics, funding, cooperation of animal welfare organizations?

Don't get discouraged – re-evaluating a program is in itself a form of progress because you are acknowledging that you don't want to waste time and money on ineffective or inefficient programs.

## Step 10: Update and Evaluate Your Data Regularly



**T**he last step is to make sure that you consistently update and evaluate your data. Community assessment and planning is data-driven, so up-to-date, comprehensive data is crucial. Your data will change as you implement programs, and your evaluation of these changes will often cause you to modify your goals and the focus of your programs. You will need to decide how often you re-examine your data and your progress, but it is recommended that you do so at least every six months.

Updating your data is also important for remaining accountable to your donors, grantors, and the public. Accountability means having clear definitions, a plan to save animal lives, specific goals, and a way to keep track of your successes and failures.

If you've made it through the steps up to this point, congratulations! Pause here to scream, jump for joy, and hug your animals. But remember: For your programs to have maximum effect, this is an ongoing process, so be vigilant in gathering your statistics and keeping an eye on your goals. With all of us working together, there soon will be a time when there are no more homeless pets.

# Beyond Community Assessment and Planning: Model Programs



**Y**ou have looked at where you are, where you want to go, and how to measure whether you are getting there. And you have learned that community assessment and planning is not an overwhelming concept, but one that can help your entire community come together to develop programs that effectively and efficiently save animals' lives.

So what else can you do before starting to develop new programs? Well, you might want to look at model programs around the country to see what other groups are doing to reduce the homeless pet population. Of course, your programs must be suited to your community, but there is no need to re-invent the wheel. There are successful programs that have been tested in communities around the nation. We can all learn from each other.

Below, we list some publications and websites that provide information on model programs and strategies, organized according to the five key areas for building a community with no more homeless pets: adoptions, spay/neuter, feral cat assistance, community involvement, and keeping pets in their homes.

All the publications listed are available as downloadable files from the resource section of the Best Friends website:

[www.bestfriends.org/nmhp/resources.html](http://www.bestfriends.org/nmhp/resources.html)

Within each of these areas are many different and innovative ways to reach your goals, so we hope you find much inspiration here.

## Adoptions

### **Secrets of the Adoptions Master**

This is an interview with Mike Arms of the Helen Woodward Animal Center. He's a master at finding creative ways to get animals out of shelters and into good new homes. From *Best Friends* magazine, September 2002.

### **Home for the Holidays**

Challenging accepted wisdom, Mike Arms of the Helen Woodward Animal Center talks about why shelters should hold adoption drives during the holiday season. From *Best Friends* magazine, November 2000.

### **It Takes a Community: Starting a Foster Community**

This 10-page guide by Nathan Winograd of Tompkins County SPCA walks you through the in's and out's of developing your own foster care program.

### **Super Adoption Manual**

This manual, by the No More Homeless Pets in Utah staff, describes how to organize and carry out a successful Super Adoption event. It includes tips and sample forms.

### **Taking the Animals to the People: The Furburbia Story**

This brief guide describes the creation and operation of the Furburbia pet adoption center in a mall storefront in Salt Lake City, and explains how you might get started on a similar endeavor in your community.

## Spay/neuter

### **Animal Care and Control Procedure Manual: New Hope Program**

This 15-page manual describes the New Hope Program (in Maricopa County, Arizona), which finds permanent homes for animals who could not be adopted under regular shelter circumstances.

### **Helpful websites and web pages:**

Check out these websites for ideas on how to do online adoptions:

- San Francisco SPCA [www.sfspca.org](http://www.sfspca.org)
- Helen Woodward Animal Center [www.animalcenter.org](http://www.animalcenter.org)
- No More Homeless Pets in Utah [www.utahpets.org](http://www.utahpets.org)

### **Starting a Spay/Neuter Program**

This 10-page guide describes how two people in Pennsylvania started a successful spay/neuter program in their community. They talk about assessing the needs of your community, working with veterinarians, and promoting the program. Includes sample forms.

### **Mobile Spay/Neuter Clinic Operations**

Based on a study of many vans in operation across the U.S., this publication profiles some of the most successful spay/neuter vans. Includes a model budget and plan.

### **Big Fix FAQ**

This document answers frequently asked questions about the Big Fix, the mobile spay/neuter van for No More Homeless Pets in Utah.

### **Nine Model Programs for Highly Successful Spay/Neuter**

This 10-page publication contains brief profiles of different types of spay/neuter programs, from MASH-style clinics to voucher programs to partnerships with vet schools.

### **Helpful websites and web pages:**

SPAY/USA, a program of The Pet Savers Foundation, is a nationwide network and referral service for affordable spay/neuter services:

[www.spayusa.org](http://www.spayusa.org)

The No More Homeless Pets Forum had a discussion on early-age spay/neuter during the week of February 24–28, 2003. To access the transcript, go to the following web page and click on “NMHP Forum”:

[www.bestfriends.org/nmhp/nmhp-home.htm](http://www.bestfriends.org/nmhp/nmhp-home.htm)

## Feral-cat assistance

### **Caring for Feral Cats**

This short, simple guide by Best Friends staff describes how and why trap/neuter/return works; how to obtain low-cost spay/neuter services; and how to do the trap/return process.

### **Compassion Is the Way: The Care and Feeding of Feral Cats**

This 19-page manual by Nathan Winograd of Tompkins County SPCA walks you through the process of starting a feral-cat assistance program in your community.

### **Helpful websites and web pages:**

Alley Cat Allies is the premier national organization for information about TNR and feral cats. There's a lot of information on their website:

[www.alleycat.org](http://www.alleycat.org)

The No More Homeless Pets Forum had a discussion on working with and caring for feral cats during the week of December 9–13, 2002. To access the transcript, go to the following web page and click on “NMHP Forum”:

[www.bestfriends.org/nmhp/nmhp-home.htm](http://www.bestfriends.org/nmhp/nmhp-home.htm)

### **Some additional ideas and strategies:**

- Provide education about feral cats by distributing fact sheets and conducting classes on TNR
- Have cat-food drives to help caretakers with the costs
- Seek out partnerships with vet and vet-tech schools to defray the costs of spay/neuter services

## Community involvement

### **Building a No-Kill Community**

In this 20-page guide, Nathan Winograd of Tompkins County SPCA explains his successful three-point plan to end the killing of healthy pets in his community.

### **Building a Successful Coalition**

This brief document explains the 12 cardinal rules for getting organizations to work together to end the killing of homeless pets.

### **Building a Volunteer Brigade**

This document describes the formation and operation of the Best Friends Brigade, a team of volunteers in Los Angeles who help out at local animal shelters.

### **How to Organize Your Own Week for the Animals**

This guide gives a brief overview of Utah's Week for the Animals and outlines how to develop a similar program for your state, city or community.

### **Maddie's Fund**

Maddie's Fund is a family foundation endowed through the generosity of Cheryl and Dave Duffield, PeopleSoft founder and board chairman. The foundation is helping to finance the creation of a no-kill nation. For more information on how to apply for a grant from Maddie's Fund, visit their website: [www.maddiesfund.org](http://www.maddiesfund.org).

## Keeping pets in their homes

## Other community assessment resources

### **Volunteers: Getting Ready for Them, Finding Them, Keeping Them**

This guide offers advice on preparing to bring volunteers on board, recruiting them, training them, and keeping them happy and active.

### **What Worked, What Didn't, What's Next (Year 1 and Year 2)**

These two publications give a detailed review of the various components of the No More Homeless Pets in Utah campaign, a comprehensive effort to end the euthanasia of healthy dogs and cats in Utah by 2005. The components addressed are adoption programs; special events and promotions; working with animal control, rescue partners and veterinarians; spay/neuter programs; marketing, advertising and public relations; corporate sponsorship and cause marketing; and volunteer programs.

### **Welcome to the Animal Fringe**

From the weird to the wonderful, this article from *Best Friends* magazine (July/August 2003) describes some creative strategies for getting people in your community involved in helping the animals.

### **Some ideas and strategies:**

- Create a list of pet-friendly housing sources in your community
- Provide a voucher for a free vet visit after adoption
- Ensure that animals are socialized while they are in your shelter
- Create a list of local referrals for doggie daycare, dog walkers, and pet sitters
- Provide behavior and training classes, or create a list of reputable trainers
- Provide advice and education through a behavior hotline and behavior fact sheets

### **Some ideas and strategies:**

- **Look for a Leadership Organization in your community.** These organizations are often part of the Chamber of Commerce and are named after the community. They support the efforts of local leaders to solve community problems. For example, Leadership Greensboro in North Carolina has taken a lead role in organizing a local No More Homeless Pets program.
- **Seek out public policy organizations** with names like the Center for Effective Government or the Metropolitan Planning Council. These organizations create citizen committees to look at local problems and develop solutions.
- **Check out your local universities.** They often have public policy, political science, or marketing departments that can help develop surveys, marketing plans, and needs assessments as class projects.
- **Check out the International City/County Management Association (ICMA),** which we mentioned on page 27 because they offer a book on doing public surveys. They have other resources that may be of use to you. You can learn more about their services by calling 800-745-8780 or going online at [www.icma.org](http://www.icma.org).