

The No Kill Advocate

A No Kill nation is within our reach

Issue #3 2007

A Lifesaving Matrix

For well over a century, the killing of animals has been a central strategy of most SPCAs, humane societies and animal control facilities which contract with cities and towns to run shelters for animals who are stray or no longer wanted. They even created a euphemism—"putting them to sleep"—to make the task of killing easier. And, in the end, that's exactly what the humane movement has become: a movement of "euphemisms"—euphemisms such as "putting them to sleep," "euthanasia," and "humane death." These euphemisms have been created to obscure the gravity of what is actually occurring and to avoid accountability for it. In the age of No Kill, add one more: "unadoptable."

To shelters mired in reactionary philosophies, an "unadoptable" animal is interpreted very broadly. Some shelters, for example, consider a kitten with a minor cold or a dog older than five years old to be unadoptable.

Shelters with a highly restrictive, meaningless definition of "unadoptable" ignore the fact that some adopters want older animals who are less excitable and more sedate, to match their lifestyle. They ignore the fact that if shelters let people know how they can help, people respond. And they ignore the importance of people wanting to be heroic, to save the life of an animal who someone else failed to love. But the restrictive definition of what constitutes an "adoptable" animal is not simply a failure to overcome a personal bias. It also has an



intentional and dark side: the label of "unadoptable" allows shelters to appear to be doing a better job than they are doing.

To the public, "unadoptable" implies a dog or cat who is hopelessly sick or injured, or in the case of dogs, who may be vicious and therefore pose a threat to public safety. That is what many of these shelters expect the public to believe: that they are, in fact, already meeting the dictionary definition of euthanasia ("the act or practice of killing hopelessly sick or injured individual animals in a relatively painless way for reasons of mercy") when they call a dog or cat "unadoptable." But that is not the criteria they are using to make those determinations. As a result, while shelters claim that they are saving "most adoptable animals," they are still killing as they have always done but only after unfairly labeling dogs "unadoptable."

In order to create fair and realistic definitions, the No Kill Advocacy Center has teamed up with the Philadelphia Animal Welfare Society to develop a "matrix" for agencies to use in order to characterize which animals are savable. Instead of giving shelters an excuse to kill, this model matrix is focused on pushing shelters to save more lives:

"No matrix can conceivably cover every condition or combination of conditions that might affect an individual animal. These definitions should be utilized based on a candid and realistic assessment of each animal's condition and not based on subjective and often self-serving notions of adoptability. In cases of doubt, the default shall always be a preference for lifesaving."

Indeed, even if a condition is not treatable, the emphasis remains, where possible, on lifesaving. The document states that *"an animal deemed non-savable may still be successfully cared for, transferred or adopted to an individual or organization capable of providing hospice care."*

While some organizations try to define animals away so they can appear to be doing a better job than they are, the Matrix says that:

"Conditions such as fleas, ear mites, or pregnancy do not change the animal's status from being healthy since they are resolved through professionally standard routine shelter care, such as flea preventative and spay or neuter surgery, and do not require out of the ordinary care. Healthy also includes animals who are exhibiting behaviors considered

normal for the species such as house soiling, territorial marking, barking, chewing, digging or scratching behavior..."

"An animal does not have to be cute and cuddly or easy to place to meet this definition. Healthy is not the same as easy to adopt. The animal may be blind, deaf, old, or missing a limb, but as long as the animal is healthy, she meets the definition."

By contrast, the definition of animals who are not savable is narrow, to avoid killing animals who can be saved. As a result, it utilizes the definition found in the No Kill Advocacy Center's model legislation, the Companion Animal Protection Act of 2007:

"Non-Savable" shall include: (1) animals who are severely sick or injured and whose prognosis for rehabilitation is poor or grave and (2) vicious or dangerous dogs."

"Non-savable animals include irremediably suffering animals. "Irremediably Suffering" shall include any animal with a medical condition who has a poor or grave prognosis for being able to live without severe, unremitting pain."

In addition, the Matrix provides a list of common conditions as an example of who is savable.

Finally, unlike some other plans, the No Kill Advocacy Center requires healthy and treatable feral cats to be saved. The Matrix states:

Feral cats are savable or non-savable depending on their medical condition only. For purposes of providing

accurate data, a shelter may subcategorize feral cats as "feral cats" and then further break them out into savable and non-savable depending on their medical condition. A feral cat with no known medical conditions, for example, is considered "feral cat/healthy." A feral cat with a respiratory infection is considered "feral cat/treatable." Both of these conditions are savable. In order to achieve No Kill, a shelter or community must "zero out" deaths in these categories as well, usually through Trap-Neuter-Release/Return programs.

Several notes of caution are in order. The Matrix's main purpose is to force accountability on shelters and their leadership who claim they are saving "adoptable" animals. In other words, if a shelter is killing animals in the "savable" category, it cannot claim they are "unadoptable" or that the shelter is "No Kill." The Matrix should not be one more layer of bureaucracy to be created before lifesaving begins.

Some agencies have indicated that "shelters must first determine exactly what animals are being euthanized and for what reasons. This information is essential in order for shelters to better direct their resources and efforts."

This is unnecessary, a needless delay, and a financially wasteful process for three reasons. The first reason is that every shelter which has not achieved No Kill is killing animals because they are not comprehensively implementing the programs of services necessary to achieve No Kill which are identified in the No Kill Advocacy Center's No Kill Equation. (Available in the Resource Library of our website at

www.nokilladvocacycenter.org). The No Kill Equation is the only national model which has allowed communities to achieve No Kill.

The second reason is that if a shelter embraces those programs, the issue will be addressed. The No Kill Equation provides for all categories of "at risk" animals, and resolves all of the reasons animals are being killed in shelters. There is simply no need for a study which will identify the cause of the problem as lack of the enclosed programs.

Third, a shelter will achieve No Kill and therefore "zero out" deaths in the savable category only when it saves approximately 91-95% of all animals it takes in. To put it bluntly: regardless of what claims shelters make, No Kill can only be achieved when at least 90% of all the animals impounded (regardless of reason) are saved. Anything short of that is mislabeling them as "unadoptable."



The No Kill Advocacy Center would like to thank Tara Derby and Susan Cosby of the Philadelphia Animal Welfare Society (PAWS), who did most of the initial work on creating this matrix. Please note that PAWS' final matrix differs in part from the "model" Matrix. In addition, the Center would like to thank the following for their review and comments: Bonney Brown, Executive Director, and the Executive Team at the Nevada Humane Society; and, Michael Baus, San Francisco SPCA, retired. The full text of the Matrix follows. In addition, you can download a copy of the Matrix in the Resource Library Section at nokilladvocacycenter.org.

Lifesaving Matrix for Shelter Dogs & Cats

In order to facilitate accurate data collection and assure consistent reporting on the condition of individual animals in the community, the following definitions have been developed:

Savable		Non-Savable	
Healthy	Treatable	Irremediably Suffering	Vicious/Dangerous Dogs

No matrix can conceivably cover every condition or combination of conditions that might affect an individual animal. These definitions should be utilized based on a candid and realistic assessment of each animal's condition and not based on subjective and often self-serving notions of adoptability. In cases of doubt, the default shall always be a preference for lifesaving. Additionally and importantly, an animal deemed non-savable may still be successfully cared for, transferred or adopted to an individual or organization capable of providing sanctuary or hospice care.

Savable: "Savable" shall include animals who are healthy or who have treatable medical conditions.

Healthy: "Healthy" shall include any animal who is not sick or injured; or who is not a vicious dog.

Conditions such as fleas, ear mites, or pregnancy do not change the animal's status from being healthy since they are resolved through professionally standard routine shelter care, such as flea preventative and spay or neuter surgery, and do not require out of the ordinary care. Healthy also includes animals who are exhibiting behaviors considered normal for the species such as house soiling, territorial marking, barking, chewing, digging or scratching behavior. Likewise feral and free roaming cats who are inhibited in social interactions with humans are not exhibiting abnormal behavior for the species. As long as a feral or free roaming cat is healthy, he meets the definition.

An animal does not have to be cute and cuddly or easy to place to meet this definition. Healthy is not the same as easy to adopt. The animal may be blind, deaf, old, or missing a limb, but as long as the animal is healthy, she meets the definition.

Treatable: "Treatable" shall include any animal who is sick or injured, whose prognosis for rehabilitation of that illness and/or injury is excellent, good, fair, or guarded. An animal does not have to be "cured" to be treatable. For instance, a diabetic cat may never be cured but she is likely to live a normal life if given insulin shots.

Non-Savable: "Non-Savable" shall include: (1) animals who are severely sick or injured and whose prognosis for rehabilitation is poor or grave and (2) vicious or dangerous dogs.

Irremediably Suffering: Non-savable animals include irremediably suffering animals. "Irremediably Suffering" shall include any animal with a medical condition who has a poor or grave prognosis for being able to live without severe, unremitting pain.

Vicious Dog: "Vicious Dog" is a dog who has a propensity to or history of causing grievous bodily harm to people even when the dog is not hungry, in pain, or frightened, and whose prognosis for rehabilitation of that aggression is poor or grave.

Dangerous Dog: "Dangerous Dog" is a dog adjudicated to be vicious by a court of competent jurisdiction and where all appeals of that judicial determination have been unsuccessful.

Common Conditions: *Provided is a list of common conditions seen in shelter animals categorized appropriately.*

Savable – Healthy:

Age (senior/geriatric animals)
Behavior issues typical with dogs and cats such as house soiling issues, social shyness, barking, escaping
Blindness
Fleas
Ear mites
Missing limb
Pregnancy

Savable – Treatable:

Allergies, including dermatitis
Broken bones
Dental conditions
FeLV, FIV, asymptomatic
Heartworm positive
Hyperthyroid
Lacerations
Mange, demodectic or sarcoptic
Motherless neonates
Ocular conditions such as "cherry eye"
Otitis
Respiratory infection such as kennel cough or URI
Ringworm
Separation anxiety
Conditions resolved by surgery
Food guarding
Urinary tract infections

Stomatitis

Diabetes

Abscesses

Canine parvovirus and feline distemper (adult animals)

Non-savable:

Canine parvovirus and feline distemper (puppies and kittens)

Vicious dogs

Cancer with a poor prognosis

FeLV, symptomatic

Renal failure (end stage)

Feral cats are savable or non-savable depending on their medical condition only. For purposes of providing accurate data, a shelter may subcategorize feral cats as "feral cats" and then further break them out into savable and non-savable based on their medical condition. A feral cat with no known medical conditions, for example, is considered "feral cat/healthy." A feral cat with a respiratory infection is considered "feral cat/treatable." Both of these conditions are savable. In order to achieve No Kill, a shelter or community must "zero out" deaths in these categories as well, usually through Trap-Neuter-Release/Return programs.

County Votes for No Kill

In a historic vote for the animals, the King County (WA) Council voted to embrace the No Kill philosophy and require King County Animal Services to save 80% of all dogs and cats in 2008 and 85% in 2009. In so doing, it embraced the programs and services of the No Kill Advocacy Center's No Kill Equation, the only model nationally that has been successful in creating a No Kill community and the model responsible for success in Washoe County, NV (saving over 85% of dogs and cats this year), Charlottesville, VA (saving 92% of dogs and cats), Tompkins County, NY (saving over 90% of dogs and cats since 2002), and other communities.

The Coalition for a No Kill King County spearheaded the effort locally after it was introduced in the Council. The No Kill Advocacy Center worked closely with the Coalition for a No Kill King County, the Feral Cat Spay/Neuter Project, and King County Council Member Julia Patterson's Office to set a target of 85% within two years and to include the programs and services of the No Kill Equation as the framework for the future.

As a result, programs like Trap-Neuter-Return for feral cats, working with rescue groups, off-site adoption events, foster care programs, medical rehabilitation and behavior socialization programs, and working with volunteers are now official policy in King County.

The effort also received broad and overwhelming support from other shelters, rescue groups, and animal

lovers from the Seattle/King County area and nationwide.

Unfortunately, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the nation's wealthiest animal protection organization, attempted to stop this week's vote. In a formal letter and testimony to the Council, HSUS officially asked the Council "to abstain from voting on the proposals at this time," disparaging the No Kill philosophy, and arguing for more study and analysis.

The No Kill Advocacy Center responded to HSUS' allegations showing that communities which embrace the No Kill philosophy and comprehensively implement the No Kill Equation can save in excess of 85% of animals in less than two years.





We also argued that:

"Not only should the council ignore HSUS and not abstain from voting, it should signal its desire to end the killing by unanimously voting to achieve it by 2009. King County has the power to build a new consensus, which rejects killing as a method for achieving results. And the animals and citizens of King County can look forward to a time when the killing of savable animals in shelters is viewed as a cruel aberration of the past..."

"A 'yes' vote (and follow-through by the animal services agency) will have two profound effects. First, it will save thousands of dogs and cats in King County who would otherwise be killed. Second, it will cement the County's place historically nationwide and encourage others to embrace the No Kill philosophy as well: 'If they can do it in King County, we can do it here!'"

Thankfully, the voices of compassion prevailed. And No Kill is now official policy in King County. The next—and vitally important—step is to ensure that the Council's mandate is carried

out by the King County Animal Welfare Advisory Committee and King County Animal Services.

Saving More Animals Than Ever Before...

After only a few months of launching an ambitious No Kill initiative, Washoe County (Reno) NV under the leadership of the Nevada Humane Society (NHS) is saving over nine out of ten dogs and almost eight out of ten cats.

Since January 1 (through May 31) under new leadership, with our support and guidance, compared to the same time frame for 2006:

- The kill rate for dogs has dropped 54%
- The kill rate for cats has dropped 46%

At the same time:

- The adoption rate for dogs has increased 97%
- The adoption rate for cats has increased 88%

Year to date, the county save rate (including animal control) for dogs is 91% and the save rate for cats is 77%.



Washoe County now joins only a very small handful of communities in the entire nation with a better than 90% save rate for dogs and is among the tops in the nation with cats.

But NHS is not satisfied: "Our goal is to make Washoe County the safest community for homeless dogs and cats in the United States."

The Naysayers

Nonetheless, we have been hearing from bureaucrats in other communities who are trying to downplay, distort, and disparage these impressive achievements by claiming that the situation is unique, that their own community is different.

When San Francisco achieved success by saving all healthy dogs and cats city and county-wide in the mid-1990s, bureaucrats complacent with the status quo across the country said it could only be done in an urban community, not a rural one because of what they claimed were antiquated views of animals and poverty.

When No Kill was achieved in rural Tompkins County, NY at an open door animal control shelter (93% save rate), they said it could not be done in the South for similar reasons.



When it was achieved in the South in Charlottesville, VA at an open door animal control shelter (92% save rate), they said it could not be done in developing communities that are seeing tremendous population growth and urban sprawl because of the influx of new people and animals. The developing success in Reno disproves that, too.

That is why the question of public vs. private shelter, urban vs. rural, or South vs. North is not relevant. The only relevant inquiry is whether the shelters are comprehensively and rigorously implementing the programs and services that save lives. If they do, they will achieve success.

The Power to Change

Remember, the power to change the status quo is in your hands. No Kill will be achieved when citizens demand that their shelters fully and rigorously implement the programs and services of the No Kill Equation.

If you want to make a difference, do the following:

- **Get informed:** *Read Building a No Kill Community.*
- **Be thorough:** *Follow the guide to Reforming Animal Control.*
- **Be successful:** *Use the proven model of the No Kill Equation.*
- **Don't settle:** *Demand endorsement of the U.S. No Kill Declaration.*
- **Require accountability:** *Seek the Companion Animal Protection Act.*

All of these documents are available on the No Kill Advocacy Center's website in the "Resource Library" section.

Maddie's Fund Award



The Pet Rescue Foundation

The No Kill Advocacy Center has been selected by Maddie's Fund to receive a grant of \$10,000 to use toward our goal of a No Kill nation. Its purpose is to help shelters ramp up their adoption programs. We are grateful and deeply appreciative that Maddie's Fund is supporting our important work.

Already, the grant is going to its intended purpose. According to Bonney Brown, the new Executive Director, of the Nevada Humane Society:

"Working with Nathan Winograd [Director of the No Kill Advocacy Center] has been a huge asset to us here in Reno (Washoe County, NV). His advice and insights have been invaluable to us here at Nevada Humane Society and has been key to the dramatic and rapid improvement in our county-wide save rate for dogs and cats. In addition to helping us to ramp up our adoption rate, his advice has really helped to improve the operations at the shelter."

In addition, we are helping the

Philadelphia Animal Care & Control Association and Philadelphia Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) develop a joint agreement with a private shelter to save the lives of up to 4,800 dogs and cats per year, and have worked with PAWS to develop the enclosed lifesaving Matrix, a tool which Maddie's Fund recommends for communities nationwide.

The Matrix will be part of our "Reforming Animal Control" package which includes a step-by-step guide to reforming animal control, model legislation aimed at making shelters more accountable (The Companion Animal Protection Act), the U.S. No Kill Declaration, the No Kill Equation, and our guide to Building a No Kill Community.

A portion of the award will also go toward the development of our adoptions and rescue group section of our upcoming operations manual for shelters. The operations manual will set out a "gold standard" for shelter operations for both private and municipal shelters, which will include everything from intake procedures, cleaning and vaccination protocols, adoptions, redemptions, assessing dogs, socializing animals, field services, and more.

For more information about Maddie's Fund, visit www.maddiesfund.org.



No Kill Sheltering



No Kill Sheltering, our print magazine, is the only national magazine dedicated to shelter philosophy, strategies for saving lives, and more—all from a No Kill perspective. It is available only to members of the No Kill Advocacy Center.

In the next issue, we take you behind closed doors at U.S. animal shelters. In past issues, we looked at:

- **Defining No Kill.** There is only one legitimate definition of what constitutes a No Kill shelter or community.
- **Adopting your Way to No Kill.** Not only can shelters adopt their way out of killing, they should.
- **The No Kill Equation.** The mandatory programs and services necessary for saving lives.

- **There Ought Not to be a Law.** Legislation is not often the answer to saving lives. In fact, most often it has the opposite results.
- **A Call for Regime Change.** It is time to replace most of the nation's shelter directors for killing animals entrusted to their care and thus failing to do the job they were hired to do.
- **A Call to Ban the Gas Chamber.** Gas killing of shelter animals is cruel and should never be used.
- **Stoking the Fires of Hate.** How the animal welfare movement is failing Pit Bulls.
- **Temperament Testing in the Age of No Kill.** A new look at how shelters mislead the public into thinking the animals they are killing are "unadoptable."
- **Do Feral Cats Have a right to Live?** A model national standard for feral cats.
- **The U.S. No Kill Declaration.** Our manifesto for the rights of shelter animals and demands for a No Kill nation.



For more information or to subscribe, go to www.nokilladvocacycenter.org and click on "No Kill Newsletter." No Kill Sheltering can also be sent to your local shelter.

A No Kill Nation

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

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

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

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



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

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

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Or make a secure online donation at
www.nokilladvocacycenter.org.