

# DOLLARS & SENSE

A GUIDE FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

## The Economic Benefits of No Kill Animal Control



**Reduce  
Costs**



**Increase  
Revenues**



**Support  
Community  
Businesses**



THE NO KILL ADVOCACY CENTER

# THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF NO KILL ANIMAL CONTROL

Dollars & Sense



## MYTH:

No Kill is too expensive. Our community can't afford it.

## FACT:

No Kill is cost-effective, fiscally responsible, and a great economic boon to local communities. Municipalities which want to enact good policy and improve the local economy should invest in lifesaving at their local shelter. Given the cost savings and additional revenues of doing so (reduced costs associated with killing, enhanced community support, an increase in adoption revenues and other user fees, and additional tax revenues), as well as the positive economic impact of adoptions, a community cannot afford *not* to embrace No Kill.

**Today, there are hundreds** of cities and towns across the United States with save rates as high as 99%; in states as diverse as Kentucky, Virginia, Indiana, California, New York, Texas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, and elsewhere. These communities share little in common demographically. What they do share is leadership with a “can do” attitude and a passion for saving lives, as well as the model used to achieve it: the programs and services of the No Kill Equation (See *No Kill 101: A Primer on No Kill Animal Control Sheltering for Public Officials*, available for free at [nokilladvocacycenter.org](http://nokilladvocacycenter.org)). These communities not only prove that No Kill can be achieved at “open admission” municipal shelters in both urban and rural, Northern and Southern, large and small, and both politically liberal and conservative communities, but also that No Kill is consistent with a municipal shelter’s public safety mandate. They also disprove the idea that communities with high intake rates can’t be No Kill because of the antiquated and disproven notions of “pet overpopulation” and the “irresponsible public.”

## NO KILL EQUATION PROGRAMS:

- Volunteers
- Rescue Access
- Foster Care
- Comprehensive Adoption Programs
- Pet Retention
- Trap, Neuter, Release
- Medical and Behavior Prevention & Rehabilitation
- Public Relations/Community Involvement
- High-Volume, Low-Cost Spay/Neuter
- Proactive Redemptions
- Leadership

This is good news because not only do the animals deserve it and alternatives to killing exist, but the public is increasingly demanding it. In a national survey, 96% of Americans—almost every single person across the social and political spectrum—said we have a moral obligation to protect animals and that we should have strong laws to do so. Saving lives is not only good public policy; it is also good bipartisan politics. But at a time when economic challenges are being faced in communities across the country, legislators and policy makers are asking if they can afford to embrace a more humane alternative.

Thankfully, many communities have already proven that No Kill animal control is cost-effective, saves municipalities expenses associated with killing, and brings badly needed revenues into public coffers and community businesses. In addition, while some of the communities which have embraced No Kill have also increased funding for animal services, not all of them have. Achieving No Kill does not

necessarily require increased expenditures on animal control.

Although costs vary somewhat, impounding, caring for, and ultimately killing an animal and disposing of his/her body costs approximately \$106.00 (\$66 for impoundment and \$40 for killing and disposal). The process is entirely revenue negative to the municipality in contrast to the No Kill approach which transfers costs to private philanthropy, brings in adoption revenue and other user fees, and supports local businesses. In just one community, a No Kill initiative yielded \$250,000 in increased revenues at a time the shelter also significantly reduced expenditures. In addition, the positive economic impact to businesses due to subsequent spending by adopters on those animals totaled over \$12,000,000 in sales annually. Over the course of the lifetime of those animals and subsequent adoptions, it is estimated that these animals will generate \$300 million, bringing in over \$20,000,000 in sales tax revenues.

Does it make more economic sense to adopt out animals, transfer animals to private non-profit rescue organizations, and increase the number of stray animals reclaimed by their families, all revenue positive activities that save the costs of killing and bring in fees and other revenues? Of course it does. At a time when dozens of communities across the country have achieved No Kill, including those with per capita intake rates up to eight times higher than New York City, shelters which continue to kill in the face of lifesaving alternatives are not only engaging in morally bankrupt conduct (killing animals who have a place to go), they are bankrupting community coffers. No Kill animal control not only makes good sense.

It makes *dollars and cents*.

# DISPROVING PET OVERPOPULATION

## Think there are “too many animals and not enough homes”? Think again...

Nationally, roughly four million animals are killed in shelters every year. Of these, upwards of 99% of all shelter animals are healthy and treatable. The remainder consists of hopelessly ill or injured animals and vicious dogs whose prognosis for rehabilitation is poor or grave. That would put the number of savable animals at roughly 3.8 million. At the same time, over 23 million Americans will get a new pet every year, and 17 million of those households have not decided where they will get that animal and can be influenced to adopt from a shelter. Even if upwards of 80 percent acquired an animal from somewhere other than a shelter, U.S. shelters could still stop killing all healthy and treatable animals. On top of that, not all animals entering shelters need adoption. Some will be lost strays who will be reclaimed by their family (shelters which are comprehensive in their lost pet reclaim efforts, for example, have demonstrated that as many as two-thirds of stray dogs can be reunited with their families). Others are unsocialized feral cats who should be neutered and released. Still others will be beyond a shelter's ability to medically save. In the end, a shelter only needs to find new homes for roughly half to 60% of all incoming animals to end the killing. And in more and more communities, that is exactly what they are doing.





## NO KILL ANIMAL CONTROL IS CONSISTENT WITH A MUNICIPAL SHELTER'S PUBLIC SAFETY MANDATE

A No Kill community is one where no healthy or treatable animals are killed.

Unfortunately, there are some animals who are hopelessly ill or injured, irremediably suffering, or in the case of dogs, vicious with a poor prognosis for rehabilitation.

These animals are often not adoption candidates and, at this time in history, are killed, unless hospice care and sanctuaries are available.

And while many shelters are having great success placing animals many would have considered “unadoptable” in years past and those efforts will continue and accelerate in the coming years with greater innovation in veterinary and behavior medicine, because the No Kill philosophy does not mandate that vicious dogs be made available for adoption, it is wholly consistent with public safety.



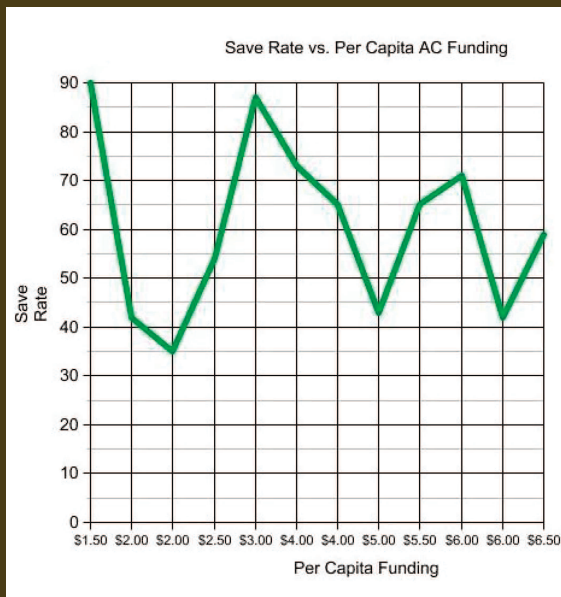
### ECONOMIC COSTS OF NO KILL

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

In addition, a national, multi-state study found no correlation between per capita funding for animal control and save rates. One community saved 90 percent of the animals, while another saved only 40 percent despite four times the per capita rate of spending on animal control. One community has seen killing rates increase over 30 percent despite one of the best-funded shelter systems in the nation. Another has caused death rates to drop by 50 percent despite cutting spending.

Nationally, per capita funding ranged from \$1.50 to about \$6.30. Save rates ranged from 35% (\$2.00 per capita) to 90% (\$1.50 per capita), but their lifesaving rates did not follow any predictable pattern. There were shelters with an 87% rate of lifesaving spending only \$2.80 per capita, and shelters with a 42% rate (less than half of the former) spending more than double that (at \$5.80 per capita).

**A multi-state study found there was no correlation between rates of lifesaving and per capita spending on animal control. The difference between those shelters that succeeded at saving lives and those that failed was not the size of the budget, but the commitment of its leadership to implementing alternatives to killing.**



In other words, there was no correlation between success/failure and per capita spending on animal control. The difference between those shelters that succeeded and those that failed was not the size of the budget, but the programmatic effort of its leadership: the commitment of shelter managers to comprehensively implement a key series of programs and services. While communities should provide adequate funding, simply throwing money at the problem of shelter killing will do very little without leadership committed both to lifesaving and to accountability. Between 2007-2009, King County, Washington commissioners spent millions of additional dollars on the animal services program after three

independent evaluations revealed rampant illness, deplorable conditions, and high rates of killing. In fact, during this period, the County Commission never denied a funding request for the agency. But no improvement in animal care resulted despite the allocation of millions of additional dollars.

In Portland, OR, likewise, an analysis of shelter expenses to lifesaving found that:

Over the course of the past few years (fiscal years 2003 through 2008), a period during which the total number of animals brought into the shelter increased by only 5 percent and the agency's budget increased by 50 percent (to a current \$4.6 million), nearly every measure of the agency's performance documents failure. Adoptions are down by 40 percent (dogs) and 18 percent (cats). Nearly half of the dogs not returned to owners are killed; so too are nearly two-thirds of cats. The "kill rate" is now well above rates in neighboring counties facing far more severe budget limitations. Thousands of dollars are squandered on adversarial enforcement efforts that have achieved no meaningful improvement in the public's safety. The number of animals saved by cooperating with life-saving organizations and individuals, a number widely recognized as a key measure of community support, has dropped by 40 percent.

That doesn't mean that governments should continue underfunding their shelters. Shelters with low per capita spending claimed difficulty sustaining programs. As a result, the study should not be used as an excuse to reduce shelter budgets. It does mean, however, that to really make an impact, communities do not generally need to allocate millions of dollars more to animal control. By investing in progressive leaders willing to embrace

# PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS SAVE LIVES, SAVE MONEY & IMPROVE PUBLIC SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT

## A WIN-WIN-WIN

In 1998, California passed a law making it illegal for public (and private) shelters to kill animals when qualified rescue groups were willing to save them. It passed by an overwhelming bipartisan majority—96 to 12, as close as possible to unanimity in a state as large as California. In 2010, a similar law passed both houses of the Delaware legislature unanimously. In both of these states, it made no sense to legislators of either party that taxpayers were paying to kill animals when qualified non-profit rescue groups were willing to spend their own money (private, philanthropic dollars) to save them. In just one California County, the number of animals saved, rather than killed, went from zero (before the law was enacted and enforced) to 4,000 per year. At roughly \$40.00 per animal killed, the municipality saved \$160,000 in expenses associated with killing. A similar study in the City and County of San Francisco found the City realized an annualized cost savings of \$486,480 by working with rescue groups and No Kill shelters, rather than killing the animals these groups wanted to save.

In fact, the number of animals saved, rather than killed, by forcing shelters to work cooperatively with rescue groups increased in California from 12,526 before the law went into effect to 58,939 in 2010—a lifesaving increase of over 370%, and a potential cost savings of \$1,856,520 statewide for killing and disposal (these savings do not include additional savings relative to cost of care). In addition, because the law specifically allows shelters to charge these organizations up to the standard adoption fee, partnering with rescue groups potentially brings in millions of dollars in additional revenues.

In New York and Florida, by contrast, statewide surveys found that 71% and 63% of non-profit rescue organizations respectively have been turned away from shelters, which then killed the very animals they offered to save. This is not only unethical—killing animals when those animals have an immediate place to go—it is economically irresponsible. Not only can these shelters save on the cost of killing and disposal, they can bring in badly needed revenues to lower public expenditures on animal control or use the additional revenue to enhance services—also realizing the intangible benefit of improving public satisfaction with the job government is doing. In short, adoption programs resulting in increased lifesaving also increase revenues; while continued killing costs money.

the cost-effective and revenue-producing programs and services which make No Kill possible and to embrace public-private partnerships which save lives and save money, communities that provide funding within national norms can end the killing of savable animals (upwards of 99% of all intakes) without raiding public coffers.\*

Moreover, as most shelter costs are fixed, keeping additional animals alive does not dramatically increase costs. Since it takes roughly the same amount of time to clean a kennel as it does to kill an animal, staff increases often prove unnecessary, with the added financial benefit that cleaning requires less-skilled, less-expensive labor and can be augmented through unpaid volunteer support.

Not only do the cost-effective programs that make No Kill possible benefit a municipality's bottom line, they can be enhanced with the free support of non-profit organizations and volunteers. In San Francisco, for example, volunteers spend over 110,000 hours at the shelter each year. Assuming the prevailing hourly wage, it would cost the agency over \$1,000,000 dollars to provide those services. All too often, however, volunteers and rescuers are prevented from assisting by regressive policies in shelters across the country. Even in those communities that allow volunteers, traditional shelters find it



**Municipalities which invest in prevention programs that prevent surrenders and impounds, increase reclaim rates and reduce births realize short and long-term economic benefits.**

difficult to recruit and retain volunteers who do not want to work in an environment of killing. By adopting the No Kill philosophy, shelter volunteer rates increase dramatically, allowing more lives to be cared for and saved. In Reno, Nevada, the local shelter increased the number of volunteers from 30 to over 7,000 after launching its No Kill initiative. In addition, the number of foster homes increased from a handful to almost 2,500, all of whom help save lives at little cost to the shelter. The services volunteers provide reduce expenses, while increasing capacity, and the animals they save are then adopted out, bringing in adoption revenue to the shelter.

### **AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION**

Municipalities which invest in prevention programs also realize short and long-term economic benefits, such as programs to proactively reclaim more animals, pet retention initiatives to keep animals from entering the shelter, as well as subsidized spay/neuter.

#### **Preventing Surrenders:**

In Reno, a full-time staff member and volunteers manage an "Animal Help" desk where people calling to surrender their animals are offered no-cost advice and guidance on solving the challenges relating to their animals. A survey found that of those who agreed to participate in the program, 59% did not surrender their animal after one year, saving the shelter from having to take in

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\* Municipalities that charge high adoption and reclaim fees in order to increase revenues as much as possible are working at cross purposes with their goals of greater lifesaving—the higher the fees, the lower the number of adoptions and reclaims that occur. Municipalities can balance their animal care with their animal control goals by lowering fees, but increasing volume.



and care for those animals and more than offsetting the cost of the program.

**Increasing Reclaims:** A proactive effort to ensure that lost animals are reclaimed has led to stray redemption rates in Reno that are seven times greater than the national average for cats and over three times the average for dogs, reducing the costs of care, killing, and disposal. Over 60% of stray dogs are being reclaimed by their families—compared to the national average of roughly 20% and less than 10% for poorly-performing communities—because the agency has invested in pro-active efforts to get more animals home.

This includes officers going door-to-door to locate the “owner” when animals are picked up in the field thereby avoiding the costs of impound, holding, and potential killing; waiving fees or billing citizens rather than holding their animal on threat of execution if they cannot afford the fees or fines; uploading photographs and full descriptions of found animals onto the agency’s website so that people can identify their animals online from any computer 24 hours a day/seven days a week; and more. By returning thousands of animals every year to their homes in the field and helping thousands more get home after they have been impounded, the shelter does not spend additional money caring for and potentially killing those animals. Moreover, those animals no longer compete for kennel space or homes with other animals, allowing more resources to be allocated to those remaining animals.

**Reducing Births:** Research shows that investment in spay/neuter programs not only provides immediate public health and public relations benefits but also long-term financial savings to a jurisdiction as well. Reductions in animal intakes, fewer

animals killed, and fewer field calls associated with free-roaming, unaltered animals have been reported in communities which have invested in spay/neuter. Moreover, spay/neuter and release of feral cats has an immediate measurable lifesaving impact, in addition to immediate cost savings.

## ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF NO KILL

Beyond the increased revenues and associated savings of No Kill animal control, there are even wider economic benefits to the community. Americans spend \$50 billion annually on the care of their companion animals, an amount which is growing every year even as other economic sectors decline. Spending on animal companions is now the eighth largest sector of the economy. And giving to animal related charities is the fastest growing segment in American philanthropy. This embrace of animals cuts across all political, economic, and social demographics. And communities which adopt a No Kill orientation for animal control are reaping the economic benefits.

Before Reno’s No Kill initiative, the shelter adopted out less than 5,000 dogs and cats every year. The remainder was put to death at great cost to taxpayers and



**Animals who are adopted into a community become a valuable source of revenue for local businesses. Groomers, boarding facilities, pet sitters, veterinarians and businesses which sell products for pets such as treats and toys all benefit from the consumer needs of those who adopt shelter pets.**

# WE ARE A NATION OF ANIMAL LOVERS



Spending on companion animals is one of the mainstays of the American economy. On average, Americans spend approximately \$1,696 per dog and \$1,105 per cat annually as follows:

## DOGS

<b>Food:</b>	\$254
<b>Treats:</b>	\$96
<b>Toys:</b>	\$148
<b>Veterinary Care:</b>	\$368
<b>Medications:</b>	\$159
<b>Grooming:</b>	\$66
<b>Boarding/Pet Sitting:</b>	\$273
<b>Miscellaneous:</b>	\$332
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$1696</b>

## CATS

<b>Food:</b>	\$220
<b>Treats:</b>	\$47
<b>Toys:</b>	\$126
<b>Veterinary Care:</b>	\$226
<b>Medications:</b>	\$53
<b>Boarding/Pet Sitting:</b>	\$255
<b>Miscellaneous:</b>	\$178
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$1105</b>

*\* According to figures based on averages calculated from the American Veterinary Medical Association, American Pet Products Manufacturers Association, Bloomberg Report, and others.*

donors. In 2010, as death rates declined, the number of animals adopted doubled to just under 10,000 adoptions. In addition to a cost savings of roughly \$200,000 associated with killing, adoption fees brought in almost \$250,000 in additional revenues. Moreover, the positive economic impact of economic spending by adopters on those animals to community businesses totaled over \$12,000,000 in annual sales. With an average lifespan of roughly 11 years per animal, the total revenues to community businesses over the life of those pets could potentially top \$120,000,000. The number is substantially higher given that those impacts are exponential (in Year Two, businesses would benefit from two years worth of adoptions; in Year Three, they would benefit from three years of adoptions; etc.). In addition, not only do those businesses then employ people who turn around and spend even more, all these activities also bring in badly needed tax revenues. At an average 6% rate, adoptions over a ten-year period could potentially bring in over \$20,000,000 in sales tax alone.

While many of these economic benefits will be realized regardless of where people get their animals, cost savings and other revenues will not be realized. For one, many commercially-sourced animals come from puppy mills, which contribute to animal cruelty. In addition, the animals will not be sterilized before adoption, requiring the shelter to absorb the costs of taking in the offspring of some of those animals. Moreover, the municipality will not benefit from the decreased costs and increased revenue associated with adopting the animals to those homes. Finally, a successful adoption marketing program not only results in citizens who are more likely to adopt from a shelter, but it can increase the number of available homes as well by empowering

and inspiring local citizens to feel like valued allies in the shelter's lifesaving mission, thereby encouraging them to open their homes to additional animals.

### **DOING WELL BY DOING GOOD**

In order to avoid accountability despite growing No Kill success across the country, shelters and municipalities offer various excuses as to why their community shelter continues killing. These excuses include "pet overpopulation," "public irresponsibility," and the claims that "open-admission" shelters cannot be No Kill and that No Kill is inconsistent with a municipal shelter's public safety mandate. All of them have been proven false. No Kill has been and will continue to be embraced, achieved, and sustained in municipal shelters serving every possible geographic location and public demographic. (See *No Kill 101: A Primer on No Kill Animal Control Sheltering for Public Officials.*)

No Kill is also good policy that reduces costs associated with killing, enhances community support, increases user fees such as adoption revenues, and brings in additional tax revenues. It has a long-term beneficial community economic impact, as well. In short, No Kill is a humane, sustainable, cost-effective and economically beneficial model that works hand in hand with public safety. The successes and benefits of this approach across the country prove it.

In communities across the country, animal lovers are clamoring for change. There are legions of potential volunteers ready, willing, and able to assist at no cost to municipalities. There are non-profit rescue organizations willing to take on not just the care of the animals, but the costs of care, shifting the burden from taxpayer to private philanthropy. But they are prevented from doing so by antiquated policies that favor killing. The cost in both

animal lives and wasted taxpayer expenditures is staggering. These larger costs include unspayed animals cruelly-sourced from puppy mills supplanting adoptions, and reduced markets, resulting in lost revenue to local businesses.

All the tools, resources, caring, and compassion that make it possible for any shelter to achieve No Kill already exist in every community. If a community harnesses that compassion by embracing the No Kill philosophy and the programs and services which make it possible, it can save more lives and improve the bottom line—a classic "win-win": for the animals, for animal lovers, for community businesses, and for taxpayers.

**THE KEY TO GREATER LIFESAVING:**

**HARNESSING COMMUNITY COMPASSION**

**All the tools, resources, caring, and compassion that make it possible for any shelter to achieve No Kill already exist in every community. If a shelter harnesses that compassion by embracing the No Kill philosophy and the programs and services which make it possible, it can save more lives and every community stakeholder comes away a winner: the animals, animal lovers, community businesses, and taxpayers.**



If every animal shelter in the United States embraced the No Kill philosophy and the programs and services that make it possible, we would save nearly four million animals who are scheduled to die in shelters this year, and the year after that. It is not an impossible dream.

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

**ALSO AVAILABLE:**

**No Kill 101:  
A Primer on No Kill  
Animal Control Sheltering  
for Public Officials**

**THE COMPANION ANIMAL  
PROTECTION ACT:  
Model Legislation to  
Improve the Performance  
& Life-Saving of Animal  
Shelters**

**YOU CAN DO IT! ADOPT  
YOUR WAY OUT OF KILLING:  
A No Kill Guide for  
Animal Shelters**

**COUNTERING THE OPPOSITION:  
Responding to the Ten  
Predictable & Recurring  
Excuses of No Kill  
Opponents**

**WHAT'S IN A NAME:  
Why HSUS, the ASPCA &  
PETA Lobby AGAINST  
Shelter Reform**

**AND MORE...**

