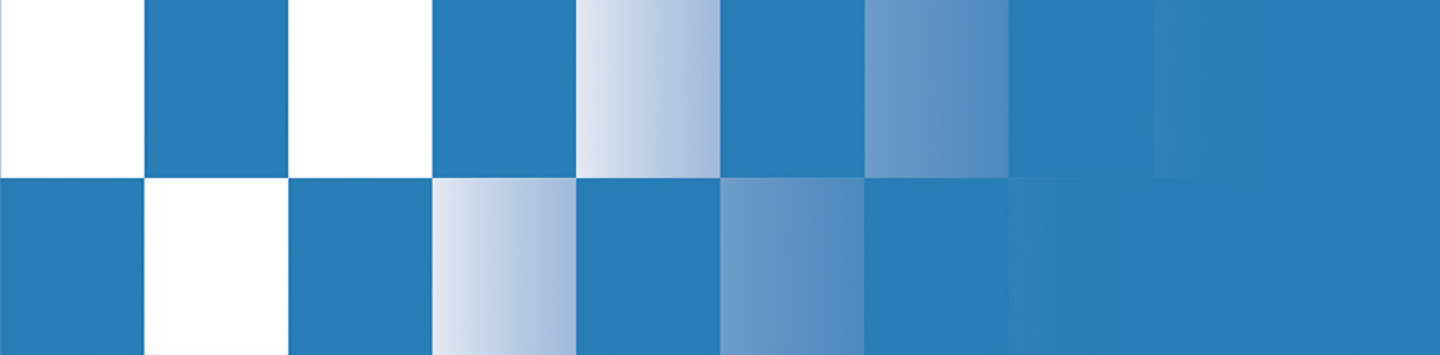




# Strategies for Successful Animal Shelters



Laura A. Reese



# **STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL ANIMAL SHELTERS**

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# STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL ANIMAL SHELTERS

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This book is dedicated to Team DACC. With great heart, commitment, skill, and compassion you have changed the world. Rock on. Also to the staff and volunteers at the Humane Society of Huron Valley who have trained and sustained me. And to Ace, who started it all.

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# CONTENTS

|                                                                   |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Foreword.....                                                     | xi        |
| <b>1 The Difference a Shelter Makes: A Tale of Two Aces .....</b> | <b>1</b>  |
| Research Focus .....                                              | 3         |
| Key Issues.....                                                   | 9         |
| Plan of the Book.....                                             | 15        |
| References .....                                                  | 19        |
| <b>2 Best Practices in Animal Sheltering.....</b>                 | <b>21</b> |
| Nature and Maintenance of the Facility .....                      | 21        |
| Data Management .....                                             | 23        |
| Population Management.....                                        | 24        |
| Animal Care.....                                                  | 25        |
| Policy and Procedures and Health and Emergency Protocols .....    | 25        |
| Volunteers .....                                                  | 27        |
| Animal Enrichment.....                                            | 28        |
| Adoption Practices.....                                           | 31        |
| Staffing and Training.....                                        | 33        |
| Community Relations .....                                         | 34        |
| Summary .....                                                     | 34        |
| Check List for Recommended Best Practices.....                    | 35        |
| References .....                                                  | 38        |
| Further Reading .....                                             | 41        |
| <b>3 Methodology .....</b>                                        | <b>43</b> |
| The Case and Legal Environment.....                               | 43        |
| The Data .....                                                    | 52        |
| Summary .....                                                     | 63        |
| References .....                                                  | 64        |
| <b>4 Activities and Practices .....</b>                           | <b>67</b> |
| Nature/Maintenance of the Facility.....                           | 67        |
| Data Management .....                                             | 70        |
| Population Management.....                                        | 71        |

|                                                                                |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Animal Care in Shelter .....                                                   | 74         |
| Health and Emergency Protocols .....                                           | 76         |
| Volunteers .....                                                               | 78         |
| Animal Enrichment .....                                                        | 82         |
| Adoption Practices.....                                                        | 91         |
| Staffing and Training.....                                                     | 95         |
| Community Relations .....                                                      | 97         |
| Practice and Activity Dimensions .....                                         | 99         |
| Summary.....                                                                   | 105        |
| Check List for Recommended Best Practices.....                                 | 107        |
| References .....                                                               | 109        |
| <b>5 Relationships Among Shelter Traits and Activities.....</b>                | <b>111</b> |
| Shelter Resources and Staffing .....                                           | 113        |
| Resources, Staffing, Training, and Activities.....                             | 118        |
| Correlations Among Activities .....                                            | 124        |
| Summary.....                                                                   | 126        |
| Findings Counter to Common Expectations.....                                   | 128        |
| Reference.....                                                                 | 129        |
| <b>6 Which Shelter Activities are Associated With Positive Outcomes? .....</b> | <b>131</b> |
| Outcome Variables .....                                                        | 133        |
| Barriers to, and Facilitators of, Success .....                                | 138        |
| Factors Affecting Outcomes.....                                                | 142        |
| Modeling Positive Outcome Variables.....                                       | 153        |
| Summary.....                                                                   | 156        |
| Check List for Recommended Best Practices.....                                 | 157        |
| References .....                                                               | 158        |
| <b>7 At the Speed of Trust: Profiles of the Most Improved Shelters .....</b>   | <b>161</b> |
| Detroit Animal Care and Control .....                                          | 165        |
| Genesee County Animal Control .....                                            | 177        |
| Harbor Humane Society .....                                                    | 183        |
| Capital Area Humane Society .....                                              | 190        |
| The Path to Success Depends on Where You Begin .....                           | 195        |

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|                                                                                                                                    |            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Shelter Improvement Check Lists.....                                                                                               | 199        |
| Reference.....                                                                                                                     | 200        |
| <br>                                                                                                                               |            |
| <b>8 There are Many Ways to be the Best: Profiles of the Most Successful Shelters .....</b>                                        | <b>201</b> |
| Humane Society of Huron Valley .....                                                                                               | 203        |
| Roscommon County Animal Control .....                                                                                              | 211        |
| Capital Area Humane Society .....                                                                                                  | 215        |
| Adopt-A-Pet.....                                                                                                                   | 216        |
| The Different Paths to Success.....                                                                                                | 221        |
| Check List for Consistently Positive Outcomes .....                                                                                | 223        |
| <br>                                                                                                                               |            |
| <b>9 The Many Paths to Success: It's a Journey Not a Destination .....</b>                                                         | <b>225</b> |
| What Are the Best Practice Recommendations in Animal Shelters? .....                                                               | 225        |
| What Is the Extent of the Use of Best Practices in Animal Shelters? .....                                                          | 228        |
| Which Shelter Traits, Programs, and Activities Are Most Strongly Associated With Optimal Outcomes Such as Live Release Rates?..... | 230        |
| What Should Animal Shelters Be Doing to Achiever Better Outcomes? .....                                                            | 235        |
| Lessons From the Case Studies.....                                                                                                 | 239        |
| Study Limitations/Future Research .....                                                                                            | 241        |
| Revisiting the Tale of Two Aces .....                                                                                              | 245        |
| References .....                                                                                                                   | 246        |
| <br>                                                                                                                               |            |
| Appendix A: Michigan Animal Shelter Registration Application .....                                                                 | 247        |
| Appendix B: Animal Shelter Annual Report.....                                                                                      | 249        |
| Appendix C: Survey .....                                                                                                           | 251        |
| Index.....                                                                                                                         | 281        |

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# FOREWORD

Some explanation is needed about the genesis of this research and some thought about how value-free research and an academic endeavor mesh with the realities of the academic's life. This book actually began about 12 years ago when my youngest daughter and I started looking at the local humane society for a dog. The search went on for a number of months, to the point where my daughter was saying "you really aren't going to get a dog are you?" Then we saw her and I knew she was the one. This led to donations to the shelter she came from and a strong desire by my daughter to volunteer there. Of course, children could not volunteer without an adult in the shelter with them, so my life as an animal shelter volunteer had begun. My daughter is now about to graduate from college, but I am still volunteering at the Humane Society of Huron Valley.

In 2011, the animal welfare case that begins the book led me to start thinking about how my academic skills might be brought to bear on the animal welfare situation in Detroit. Six years later this has resulted in a shift in the public policy focus of my research from local economic development to animal welfare policy, or my "dog research" as some colleagues call it. The desire to better mesh my private rescue world and my academic one is close to complete.

This does, however, raise the issue of value-free objectivity, a tenet of the scientific method that we teach our students, but which none of us likely lives up to in practice. After all, isn't the selection of a particular research area inherently a value judgment that it is worth our time to understand and write about it? So, the purpose of this forward is to provide truth in advertising. I remain a volunteer at the Humane Society of Huron Valley and I was one of the first volunteers allowed into the Detroit Animal Care and Control in 2015 and am still a regular there. I served on the Board of Directors for the Humane Society of Livingston County and continue to train volunteers there and to select dogs for them from DACC. I am also in the field in Detroit with Dog Aide and C.H.A.I.N.E.D., two organizations that focus on education and outreach to the pet-owning citizens of the city. These three shelters are used as examples throughout the book because I know them and are part of them. The data and analysis derived from a survey of the population of licensed animal shelters in Michigan and site visits and interviews in eight shelters are entirely empirical and as value-free

as possible. I acknowledge that some interpretations and recommendations are also rooted in my now more than 12 years in animal sheltering and rescue. And, by presenting all the data from the survey in tables, charts, and statistical analyses, I hope that readers can evaluate the interpretations based on their own understanding and research in the field.

Thanks are due to a number of people and organizations that have supported this research. To all of the staff, administrators, and volunteers at HSHV, DACC, HSLC, Dog Aide, and C.H.A.I.N.E.D., I owe a great debt for teaching me the ropes and becoming a wonderful network of friends. Thanks also to Maggie and Ace who brought me into this field and Rhymni who continues to teach me all the things I didn't realize I didn't know. Of course, I am in debt to my daughter Teagan for pushing me to volunteer in the first place and to my daughter Lidiya and husband Gary for putting up with all the animals in the house (fosters and owned). I know you two don't love it all, but you love me and I am forever grateful. The survey portion of this research has been generously supported by the Stanton Foundation. They have been delightful to work with and amazingly tolerant during the process. Several staff and graduate assistants in the Global Urban Studies Program at Michigan State University have assisted with a number of aspects of this research and it would not exist without their efforts. Edwin Phillips constructed the mailing list, implemented the survey, and created and managed the data set. Cassie Richard and Erica Briggs coded website, inspection, financial, and complaint data. Special thanks to Cassie who was tasked with coding the annual shelter activity reports which required the calculation of kill rates, a particularly depressing assignment. Thanks are also due to Kellee Remer for organizing the FOIA of all of the inspection and complaint data and to Sue Durkee for always keeping me organized and on an even keel.

# THE DIFFERENCE A SHELTER MAKES: A TALE OF TWO ACES

*Dear Ace, you came into my lobby, crouched behind my door and stared blankly at the wall, shaking. I could see your pain—I fed you, warmed you and you rewarded me by finally looking into my eyes, and for a moment, we shared your pain. I reached for the phone, thinking that I could find you a better life... Instead I sent you to your death. Please forgive me. You did not die in vain, nor will you be forgotten. This I promise you. Your last but far from only friend.*

**Mark, Ace Hardware, Detroit, 11-10-11**

In November 2011, an emaciated pit bull-type dog was found outside of an Ace Hardware store in Detroit. A concerned citizen called City of Detroit Animal Control (DAC). The dog, known as “Ace,” quickly became a media *cause célèbre* and pleas to “Save Ace” and offers of adoption from individuals and rescue groups flooded in. Yet, Ace was euthanized within the state-mandated, 4-day holding period for stray dogs, in violation of a court injunction ordering a hold on euthanasia of pit bulls at DAC, even in the face of publicity that spread around the world (<https://detroitdogrescue.com/aces-story/>). The incident pitted a host of nonprofit rescue groups and licensed animal shelters against the city bureaucracy. Media coverage highlighted not only the plight of stray and feral dogs in Detroit, but also the policies and practices at DAC, the city’s municipal animal shelter. DAC’s policy at the time was to euthanize pit bull-type dogs in all cases where an owner could not be found; live release rates for other types of dogs and cats were also uniformly low. Euthanasia rates for all animals at the shelter topped out at 97% in 2013 ([www.michigan-petfun.org/save-rate-reports-awards/2013-save-rate-report-and-awards/](http://www.michigan-petfun.org/save-rate-reports-awards/2013-save-rate-report-and-awards/)): conditions for animals in the shelter were beyond inhumane ([www.mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2015/07/blood-drips\\_from\\_detroit\\_anima.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2015/07/blood-drips_from_detroit_anima.html)). Disease was rampant, dogs were unable to fully stand and move in their cages, food was thrown on the soiled floor, and one employee was fired for allegedly feeding

a live puppy to a snake (<http://forum.kingsnake.com/law/messages/7880.html>). Even if Ace had been on a stray hold for the mandated time period, his life at DAC would not have had a happy ending.



Ace, 2001, Detroit.



Ace, 2015, HSHV.

Early in January 2015 another stray dog named Ace arrived at the Humane Society of Huron Valley (HSHV), which serves as the

open intake shelter for Washtenaw County. His time at the shelter was spent in a large kennel with outside access, he received at least four walks a day including time in a big outdoor play yard, he had toys and a raised bed, he entered the shelter's training program to enhance his adoptability, and also spent time in one of the shelter's foster homes. With a save rate exceeding 90% he was in little danger of euthanasia and was ultimately adopted. The fact that he was likely a pit bull mix had no bearing on his experience since HSHV was one of the first shelters in the state to regularly offer bully mixes for adoption. The experiences of these two Aces could not have been more different, largely as the result of the differences in the animal shelters to which they arrived.

In late December 2015, DAC hired a new director and was renamed Detroit Animal Care and Control (DACC). Animals began leaving the shelter for adoption through other shelter and rescue transfer partners. Even though DACC remained in its old building until the fall of 2016, the lives of its animals began to change dramatically. Volunteers assisted staff in cleaning, animal care, and enrichment activities. Dogs were taken outside, medical care was provided, and toys, treats and blankets were added to the kennels and cleaned appropriately. The kill rate dropped 30% in the first few months. As of fall of 2017 the shelter (now located in a newer building donated by another nonprofit shelter), is one of the most improved in the state. The differences among individual animal shelters and in the same shelter over time can literally mean life or death to the animals in their charge. This book focuses on the traits, processes, and activities of animal shelters that determine whether animal welfare is achieved, in other words, whether the Aces of this world have the first or second experience.

## Research Focus

There is surprisingly little research on animal sheltering and no studies that quantitatively assess the relationships between shelter traits and activities and critical outcome variables such as live release or save rates. The research presented in this book is based on the population of licensed shelters in Michigan and addresses this gap in extant knowledge about animal sheltering by answering the following questions:

1. What shelter traits, programs, and activities are most strongly associated with optimal outcomes such as live release rates?
2. What are the best practice recommendations in animal sheltering?

3. What is the extent of the use of best practices in animal shelters?
4. What should animal shelters be doing to foster better outcomes?
5. What avenues should future research on animal sheltering take?

While the book focuses on answering the forgoing research questions, it is important to recognize that animal sheltering knowledge and best practice recommendations are always in flux. New research on veterinary practices, animal enrichment and training, stress reduction in shelters, reasons for animal relinquishment, adoption preferences, and so on is constantly becoming available. Thus, the findings and recommendations presented here represent the state of sheltering best practice at one point in time. In addition, what are agreed to be best practices may be unreasonable for small or financially limited shelters. For many such shelters, only incremental improvement can be expected, leaving them far from ideal or state of the art. Improvement rather than perfection is a more reasonable objective.

Ongoing research on both theory and practice is critical and potential future research questions are discussed at the end of the book. It is also important to note that while the language used in this book is one of “best practices” there is rarely only one best way to accomplish any task, in this case, the sheltering of animals and the promotion of animal welfare. What works for one shelter may need to be changed or tweaked to be useful in another. And, any best practice recommendations need to be flexible enough to meet shelters where they are at. There are minimum standards of care that all shelters should provide; beyond that, variation is reasonable and may even be desirable. As will become clear from the case studies, each animal shelter is in a different place on the path to implementing guidelines and recommendations and achieving their goals. Indeed, even the goals may vary from emphasizes on public safety and education, to sheltering and adoption, to providing assistance in keeping animals in their homes, to the creation of a no kill nation.

## Definitions

The nomenclature for animal welfare facilities recognizes several definitions of terms for shelters based on their mission, function, and financing. The definitions may vary by state and even local context. [Moulton, Wright, and Rindy \(1991\)](#) identified

three types of shelters: public shelters which they referred to as “animal controls,” private shelters (“humane societies”), and private agencies with public contracts to provide animal control services. As noted by [Clancy and Rowan \(2003, p. 16\)](#): “the term shelter encompasses a wide range of entities, from an animal control facility that serves thousands of animals per year to the private citizen who rescues a few strays a year.” The situation in Michigan is complex since the terms animal shelter and humane society are used variously by different types of organizations. However, the private citizens rescuing a few strays noted above are very unlikely to opt to go through the state licensing process since it requires substantial investment in infrastructure and implies adherence to facility guidelines that a home rescue is not typically able to meet. Describing an organization as a “private” shelter is also misleading given that most humane societies and rescues are nonprofits.

Animal shelters licensed by the state of Michigan can be either open or limited intake. The former refers to an entity that takes in all animals from a particular geographic service area, such as a county or a city. Limited intake shelters can pick and choose among the animals they admit based on space, nature of the animal (breed for example), the adoption market for their area (e.g., whether small dogs are preferred or there is an aversion to or ordinances forbidding pit bulls), and health or age status. In some cases, there are limited access humane societies such as the Humane Society of Livingston County (HSLC) and the Capital Area Humane Society that operate in the same area as County Animal Control organizations (Livingston County and Ingham County Animal Control, respectively). In these two cases, most stray animals go to the county animal control. Owner relinquishments are accepted at both entities but again, the humane societies can choose among the cases and often there are waiting lists. Both of these humane societies take animals on transfer from low resource or over capacity shelters because their missions include assisting animals generally, as opposed to just those in their communities. The county facilities do not typically accept transfers because of capacity constraints emanating from their open intake status.

Some shelters have contracts with municipal entities to provide animal care and control services. For example, the HSHV is the open intake shelter and holds the contract for Washtenaw County. HSHV is a nonprofit organization and raises money through donations and fund-raising events, its public veterinary clinic, and adoption revenue to fund activities not covered in its contract with Washtenaw County. Individual cities can also

contract with HSHV to provide sheltering services. This blending of public and nonprofit funding and service provision is difficult to disentangle although the nonprofit financial reports (Form 990s) identify revenue sources.

Some entities such as DACC serve as the municipal shelter for a single city. Because Detroit also is the location of one of the nonprofit Michigan Humane Society (MHS) facilities, activities are shared between the two entities. For example, DACC, was, at the time of this writing, forbidden by local ordinance to offer animal adoption services; thus, they had to be mostly transferred to partner shelters and rescues for adoption. DACC handles stray animals in the city, while MHS accepts strays and owner relinquishments. Both entities have cruelty investigators and receive animals on bite quarantines and bailiff holds (although most such animals—typically dogs—go to DACC). DACC is also prohibited from receiving donations directly because of an ordinance designed to limit the potential for graft in the city. As a result, they have created a nonprofit, Friends of DACC, to receive donations and organize volunteers. A similar nonprofit “Friends of” organization holds the contract for running the city of Dearborn’s animal care and control shelter. Hence the nature of and relationships between licensed shelters in Michigan are complex with a good deal of individual variation.

## Narrative Examples

DACC and the HSHV, along with the HSLC, a limited intake nonprofit, will be used throughout the book to highlight differences in both organization and practice among shelters in the state of Michigan. Because DACC is prohibited from adoptions of the animals in its care, it relies on transfer partners to pull animals and offer them for adoption. Both HSHV and HSLC are transfer partners for DACC, receiving both dogs and cats. Generally, these partners (along with many, but not all, other partners) prefer not to accept pit bull-type dogs since they have large numbers in their own service areas and these dogs tend to take longer to be adopted. Transfers are a critical part of the changes at DACC that have allowed them to reduce their kill rates significantly.

The shelters are connected in other ways as well. They all have at least several volunteers in common and the veterinarian at HSLC performs specialized surgeries for HSHV. HSHV and HSLC also share dog trainers on contract to address behavioral concerns for particular animals, provide training classes to the community (HSHV), and to conduct training with shelter

personnel on dog handling. As will be discussed more fully later in the book, these networks among shelters are critical to the animal welfare mission in the state.

**Table 1.1** provides a summary of a number of basic traits of the three shelters. There are important differences in their organizational models. DACC is a municipal shelter serving the City of Detroit and is a division of the municipal health department. It serves as the open intake shelter for the city and receives the bulk of the city's stray animals. There are two other nonprofit shelters in Detroit (Michigan Humane Society Detroit Animal Care Campus and Michigan Anti-Cruelty Society) that focus on animal relinquishments, cruelty and rescue cases, and animals being held as part of legal actions. Most animals on bite quarantines are at DACC.

HSHV is a nonprofit shelter with a contract to provide animal control and welfare services for Washtenaw County and thus operates as an open intake shelter for anyone in that service area. It accepts strays, owner relinquishments, bite holds,

**Table 1.1 Nature of the Three Shelters**

|                          | DACC                          | HSHV                                           | HSLC                     |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Organizational structure | Division of Health Department | Nonprofit with county contract                 | Nonprofit                |
| Intake status            | Open intake-Detroit           | Open intake-county                             | Limited intake           |
| Service area             | City of Detroit               | Washtenaw County                               | Livingston County        |
| Transfer status          | Out only                      | Receives primarily from out of state (puppies) | Receives from instate    |
| 2016 Animal intake       | 2605                          | 5183                                           | 796                      |
| 2016 Save rate           | 60%                           | 95%                                            | 99%                      |
| Revenue <sup>a</sup>     | \$2,100,000                   | \$6,652,848                                    | \$1,060,516 <sup>b</sup> |
| Age of facility          | 86                            | 07                                             | 13                       |
| Age of organization      | 89                            | 120                                            | 46                       |
| Ancillary organizations  | Friends of DACC               | External board                                 | External board           |
| Staff size               | 14/survey 22/current          | 100                                            | 42                       |
| Veterinary clinic        | Internal only                 | Internal and external                          | Internal and external    |

<sup>a</sup>HSHV, 2016 available on website, HSLC 2015 from Charity Navigator, DACC 2016 from city budget.

<sup>b</sup>Revenue for 2015 for the HSLC is substantially higher than in previous years when its total budget was around \$400,000 or less. Significant increases in contributions and in investment income increased the 2015 revenue figures. In all years prior to 2015 the shelter was operating at a loss, with 2015 being the only year with a modest profit.

and cruelty and rescue cases. HSLC is a limited intake nonprofit that accepts relinquishments and found animals on a waiting list from Livingston County but also pulls animals from struggling shelters in other areas of the state. It does not have cruelty and rescue services; these are provided by Livingston County Animal Control which is the open intake shelter for the area. HSHV operates a Love Train transport program that brings in dogs, primarily puppies, from southern shelters and rescues. It also accepts a limited number of animals from other local shelters such as DACC. HSLC receives transfers from a number of in-state shelters, such as DACC, primarily taking adult dogs and cats.

As will be discussed more fully later, the environment of animal shelters has a significant impact on goal attainment; challenges within the community are one of the most commonly mentioned barriers to success by shelter directors. With the largest geographic service area, HSHV also has the highest number of intakes and staff. Its budget is significantly higher than the other shelters. A portion of the budget is provided by the county contract with the bulk coming from its own fund raising and donations. It is also the oldest organization although it built a state of the art facility several years ago. Given the size of its intake, DACC has low staffing and resource levels. It also operates in the oldest facility. While both HSHV and HSLC have veterinary clinics with multiple staff that serve both the shelter population and the public, DACC has a single vet to care for shelter animals only. Organizationally, the two nonprofit shelters have external Boards of Directors, while DACC is administered through the city health department. The Friends of DACC is a nonprofit whose purpose is to solicit and receive donations for the shelter and to organize its volunteer program. Finally, save rates are very high at HSHV, particularly given its open intake status. HSLC has a near 100% save rate. While the save rate at DACC is much lower than the other two shelters, it is among the most improved shelters in the state dropping from a near 100% kill rate in just 2 years.

Table 1.2 provides basic data on the three communities served by the shelters; the City of Detroit (DACC), Washtenaw County (HSHV), and Livingston County (HSLC). Clearly, the service areas are very different. Detroit is the most populous with significantly more residents of color, the greatest population loss, lower incomes, greater poverty, lower housing values, and fewer residents with a college degree or more. Washtenaw County has half the population but has greater racial diversity and numbers of foreign born (although significantly fewer

**Table 1.2 Nature of Service Area**

|                             | City of Detroit | Washtenaw County | Livingston County |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Population                  | 672,795         | 364,709          | 188,624           |
| Population change 10–16     | –5.8            | 5.7              | 4.2               |
| % White                     | 11              | 74               | 97                |
| % African American          | 83              | 13               | .60               |
| % Hispanic                  | 07              | 05               | 02                |
| % Foreign born              | 05              | 12               | 03                |
| # Households                | 255,740         | 138,067          | 68,980            |
| # Housing units             | 349,170         | 149,948          | 75,985            |
| Median value-owner occupied | \$42,300        | \$208,200        | \$192,500         |
| % Bachelors or more         | 14              | 53               | 34                |
| Median household income     | \$25,764        | \$61,003         | \$75,204          |
| % In poverty                | 40              | 14               | 07                |
| Persons per Square Mile     | 5,144           | 488              | 320               |
| Land area square miles      | 139             | 706              | 565               |

residents of color). Educational attainment and the value of owner-occupied homes are the highest of the three areas. The University of Michigan is located in Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County's largest city, contributing to the high levels of education. However, Livingston County has the highest household income and with the smallest population is less densely populated than the other areas. Poverty rates, however, are higher than in Washtenaw County suggesting greater diversity in incomes. Greater portions of Livingston County remain rural affecting both the density and income dispersion. To what extent these community differences impact the resources and activities of the three shelters and animal shelters in the state generally will be the focus of many analyses to follow.

## Key Issues

### Homeless Animals and the Role of Animal Shelters

Companion animal over-population has been a problem in the United States; the typical fertile dog produces one litter with an average of four to six puppies annually, for example. Given that there are an estimated 70 million stray cats and dogs in the country and that only 10% of animals received by animal

shelters are spayed or neutered, the potential for animal overpopulation is extreme (ASPCA, 2015a, 2015b). Animal shelters have been referred to as “the front-line response to the problem of pet overpopulation” (Moulton et al., 1991, p. 1172). Overpopulation has been included as an important aspect of social problems related to animal welfare (Hamilton, 2010), but the lack of consistent and comparable data makes empirical assessment of the companion animal population difficult (Clancy & Rowan, 2003) (Barriers to a national population baseline include the fact that there is no system to store and analyze data, extant panel surveys underrepresent transient owners and those at the lower end of the economic scale, varying methodologies for counting yield varying results, there are regional differences in pet population and care as well as urban/suburban differences (see Patronek, Glickman, & Moyer (1995) and Clancy and Rowan (2003) for more detail on pet population demographics). Models of the dynamics of the pet dog population, considering supply (birth, purchase, adoption, found as strays) and loss (lost dogs, euthanasia, relinquishment), have led some experts to suggest that pet overpopulation concerns may be overrated (Patronek and Glickman, 1994; Patronek et al., 1995).

In addition to strays, an average of 324,500 animals are relinquished to animal shelters yearly by their guardians due to family disruption (divorce, death), foreclosure, economic problems, or minor behavioral issues. Indeed, owner relinquishment is a “primary” source of animals in shelters (Stavisky, Brennan, Downes, & Dean, 2017). As a result, estimates of animals in shelters in the United States range from three to eight million (Best Friends, 2015; HSUS, 2017; Rogelberg et al., 2007). Since there are only an estimated 13,600 community animal shelters in the United States, euthanasia due to overcrowding is common; estimates of animals euthanized in shelters annually vary widely from 4 to 17 million (ASPCA, 2015a, 2015b; Bartlett, Bartlett, Walshaw, & Halstead, 2005). Based on data from the Best Friends animal rescue more than seven animals are euthanized per minute or 9000 per day. The data noted here evidence wide ranges since there is a “statistical black hole” regarding baseline population data on both owned and shelter animals in the United States and many other countries (Rowan, 1992; Stavisky, Brennan, Downes, & Dean, 2012).

While there are no general estimates on the average length of stay of animals in shelters, if a facility is overcrowded, longer stays imply a higher likelihood of being euthanized for individual animals. It seems clear that getting as many animals adopted from shelters as quickly as possible is critical to

reducing the rate at which animals are euthanized. This is essential from a humane perspective but also to make shelter resources available to as many animals as possible. It has been estimated that \$2,400 million public dollars were spent on shelters in 2007 and that communities across the United States spend about \$8 per capita on shelters ([Humane Society of the US, 2015](#)). Coupled with the fact that many severely distressed cities such as Detroit and New Orleans have increasing numbers of roaming dogs presenting health and safety risks to humans and other animals including wildlife ([Reese, 2015](#)), the public policy implications of animal shelter practices and capacities are clear.

## Animal Control Versus Animal Welfare

Generally, definitions of animal welfare are quite broad; for example, “A state of complete mental and physical health, where the animal is in harmony with its environment” (Hughes, 1976 quoted in [Fraser, 1995](#), p. 111). This suggests that animal welfare is achieved only if both biological fitness ([Barnett & Hemsworth, 1990](#)) and an optimal mental state ([Dawkins, 1990](#)) are present and an animal can fulfil its needs and wants ([Curtis, 1985](#)), including cognitive and species-specific behaviors. Thus, “one should take the question ‘when does an animal’s life go well?’ as a starting point for animal welfare” ([Staflou, Grommers, & Vorstenbosch, 1996](#), p. 227).

The animal welfare function in US cities is often seen as one of “animal control” meaning that stray animals should be removed from the streets, held temporarily in case owners come forward, and then disposed of in some manner, either through transfer to an animal shelter or through euthanasia. This view is rooted in historical frames of urban pests whereby “the construction of animals as problems relies upon cultural understandings of nature/culture relationships” ([Jerolmack, 2008](#), p. 72). Problem animals represent “the antithesis” of the ideal social/cultural human space and order where nature is subdued. Pigeons, for example, were early “problem animals” with media depicting them as filthy, immoral, and a public health issue. As a result, the feeding of pigeons was outlawed and their extermination was deemed necessary ([Jerolmack, 2008](#)). Providing animal welfare services, on the other hand, requires more of local governments because the well-being of the animal more broadly defined must be taken into consideration ([Huss, 2006](#)). Animal welfare policies must protect not just the health and safety of the human population but also the

health and safety of the animals. To be clear, because of professionalization of the field of animal control, many animal control shelters increasingly focus on animal welfare (see, for example, the National Animal Care and Control Association, NACA, [www.nacanet.org/](http://www.nacanet.org/)).

A variety of approaches can be taken regarding the organization of animal shelters and control programs and how the function is defined in local ordinances. And, the various options speak to how animal control is perceived and what types of values are emphasized in local policy. Animal control can be viewed as a law enforcement responsibility, a community service, a public health program, or as an animal welfare function (Aronson, 2010). Depending on which view is emphasized, animal control responsibilities might be the purview of the police department, public works, health department, or a separate animal welfare unit, respectively. Cities that emphasize the public health or police functions might have ordinances that stress nuisance abatement and the control of dangerous dogs, while those that see animal control as primarily about animal welfare likely stress animal cruelty regulations and the responsibilities of owners to ensure that their pets are safe, healthy and well cared for.

Ordinances reflect prevailing thought when they were adopted. Subsequent changes in both community attitudes and accepted best practices may create significant dissonance between what the ordinance requires and what communities actually desire. As will be discussed more fully later, model local animal ordinances include a wide range of issues: licensing and rabies vaccinations; leash requirements; definitions of “at-risk” and “dangerous” animals (typically dogs); licensing of feral cat colonies; animal control/welfare advisory boards; investigation of cruelty, abuse and neglect cases; training for animal control personnel; regulations for adequate care; and antitethering ordinances. These ordinances set the legal frame for local shelter operation.

## Animal Sheltering Practices

There is a dearth of academic literature assessing the broad array of animal shelter practices and almost no quantitative studies that compare shelter traits and practices to outcome variables such as live release rates. A small number of studies have used more qualitative or subjective outcome indicators such as perceived success as defined by shelter directors or shelter worker assessments of perceived animal quality of life. A recent study quantitatively examined the factors associated

with live release rates at a single open intake shelter finding that even a municipal shelter can be successful in terms of live release ([Patronek and Crowe, forthcoming](#)). Programs and activities such as a foster care program, intake interventions (offering medical and behavioral assistance to owners wanting to relinquish or euthanize their pets), and eschewing breed labels were found to increase live release ([Patronek and Crowe, forthcoming](#)). Live release was also related to several attributes of the dog including age (puppies have the highest rates), gender (females had higher live release), and morphology (pit bull-type dogs had lower rates).

Various studies have looked at specific components of shelter practice, however. For example, several scholars have examined the nature of animals coming into county shelters versus humane societies and to “open” versus “limited” intake shelters. Dogs appear to be more likely to go to animal controls while cats were more likely to arrive at a humane society. The large majority of animals at animal control facilities are brought in by an animal control officer ([Shore & Girrens, 2001](#)). This has led other scholars to suggest that humane societies that provide services for a municipality under contract are unlikely to be able to cover the costs of their operations because stray animals recovered by animal control officers (as opposed to those relinquished by owners or finders) tend to be more costly because they stay in the shelter longer and are more likely to be euthanized ([Notaro, 2004](#)). This is potentially because they are less socialized and thus could not be recovered by a member of the public (this is particularly the case with cats who may have been trapped) or have developed less desirable behaviors during their time on the street ([Notaro, 2004](#)) or because of higher health expenses due to sickness, injury, or because they were unsterilized ([Shore & Girrens, 2001](#)) (Interestingly, [Shore and Girrens \(2001\)](#) did not find any differences in the distribution of dog breeds at animal controls and humane societies.).

Thus, to some extent the odds of euthanasia are related to the history of the animal itself: health, sterilization status, and extent of socialization. How an animal is perceived by shelter staff (breed stereotypes or preferences, behaviors, relinquishment information, age, medical status) can also affect the chances of euthanization. Mixed breed dogs appear more likely to be euthanized than purebred dogs which were more likely to be reclaimed by their owners after showing up as strays. Dogs over 10 years old were more likely to be reclaimed than those under 4 months old ([Patronek et al., 1995](#)). Shelters appear to have lower euthanization rates if they, or the larger community, have a robust spay/neuter program ([Lord et al., 2006](#)). Indeed,

although animal overpopulation appears to have declined since the 1970s due to an emphasis on legislation, education, and sterilization, sterilization programs absent strong animal control and sheltering practices are unlikely to be effective (Rowan & Williams, 1987).

Other research has made recommendations for activities to improve shelter outcomes but has not involved statistical testing of relationships between activities and save rates. For example, it has been suggested that dog enrichment, including training in basic skills along with human interaction can enhance adoptability, avoid the acquisition of undesirable behaviors brought on by stress in the shelter, and shorten shelter stays thus reducing the chance of euthanasia due to kennel neurosis (Tuber et al., 1999). On the other hand, experimental research has suggested that visitors to animal shelters spend more time looking at and interacting with dogs of particular morphology (puppies, longer haired dogs, smaller dogs, and particular breeds of dogs) regardless of their kennel behaviors, calling into question training programs focusing on problematic behaviors (Protopopova & Wynne, 2016).

One study has attempted to benchmark best practices in animal shelters although it is a qualitative examination based on asking shelter officials what they thought contributed to their success (Maubach, 2014). It does not represent a systematic effort to examine the presence of a large number of best practice activities across a relatively large number of shelters. Based on 16 interviews, shelter directors tended to identify the following activities or programs as contributing to a reduction in kill rates in their organizations: humane education, trap-neuter-return programs, transfer programs, dog enrichment, foster care, facility improvements, and marketing/social media. Within these larger categories the study lacked specificity in what types of enrichment or facility improvements were conducted, however.

A relatively recent study identified the predictors of dog quality of life in shelters as assessed by kennel workers (Kiddie & Collins, 2015). Using an experimental design where length of shelter stay and type of enrichment were varied, employees gave dogs higher quality of life scores if they: had raised beds; had thirty or more minutes of human interaction per day; had sustained exercise (as opposed to short brief periods of exercise); and were provided daily training. Thus, in this study, the nature of enrichment was found to be more important to quality of life than attributes of the shelter such as nature of the kennels and noise level potentially because they address the lack of stimulation and complexity, and the anxiety inherent to

the shelter experience (Stephen & Ledger, 2006; Taylor & Mills, 2007). These findings are in line with other studies that have found that the extent of human interaction can improve the quality of life for kenneled animals (Normando, Corain, Salvadoretti, Meers, & Valsecchi, 2009; Shiverdecker, Schimi, & Hennessy, 2013). Other research has indicated that kennels that minimize noise as well as shelters in more pastoral locations enhance quality of life (Kiddie & Collins, 2015; Scheifele, Martin, Clark, Kemper, & Wells, 2012). The analyses to follow explore in detail the features of the shelter, enrichment activities, and policies and processes that are most likely to be related to desirable outcomes.

## Plan of the Book

The research presented here addresses important gaps in extant studies by delineating best practice guidelines for animal shelters, assessing how closely shelters in a single state (Michigan) come to implementing best practices, and identifying those traits and activities that are most strongly associated with positive outcomes such as live release rates, reductions in kill rates over time, and facility inspection violations. It speaks to the operation of animal shelters and their activities and outcomes. In this sense it provides critical information to shelter professionals. Through the assessment of current practice and development of questions for future research, it also speaks to researchers and academics in the areas of animal welfare. Finally, it contributes to community debate around animal sheltering and provides a means of assessing local shelters for concerned community members and animal welfare advocates.

It does so through the use of a survey sent to the population of licensed animal shelters in the state, and site visits to and interviews with staff at the best and also the most improved shelters. It profiles three shelters with differing circumstances and organization models (DACC, the HSHV, and the HSLC) to illustrate concepts, activities, and findings. [Chapter 2](#), Best Practices in Animal Sheltering, focuses on the best practice guidelines promulgated by a variety of professional organizations including the NACA, the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV), the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). It also reviews existing research from the scholarly community regarding best practices and studies of the implementation of particular aspects of best practice. Practice recommendations span the range of shelter activity: nature and

maintenance of the facility; data management; population management both in the shelter and in the community; animal care; policy and procedures including health and emergency protocols; use of volunteers; animal enrichment; adoption practices; staffing and training; and community relations. Again, because shelters vary in their ability to attain best practices both minimal and enhanced (ideal) standards are discussed. These best practice recommendations set the frame for the analysis and discussion of current shelter processes and activities in subsequent chapters.

**Chapter 3**, Methodology, lays out the methodology for the research focusing on both the quantitative survey and the qualitative shelter case studies. It begins with a detailed discussion of the legal and legislative—both state and local—environment for animal control and sheltering in the State. A detailed description of the shelters responding to the survey is provided with comparisons to the population of Michigan licensed shelters. Data on critical variables such as budget, intake, and save rates indicate that the responding organizations are representative of shelters across the state. The wide variation in Michigan shelters is clearly evident in the descriptive data with large differences in such basic resources as revenue, staffing, and volunteers. The shelters range widely in size and capacity for animals ensuring that findings and later recommendations are applicable to shelters of all sizes and organizational types. The traits described in this chapter frame the analysis to follow as shelter activities and processes, and, ultimately, outcomes are considered.

**Chapter 4**, Activities and Practices, contains a description of current shelter practices in the state of Michigan organized by the best practice recommendations provided in the literature and promulgated by professional organizations. Since the survey included a total of 80 questions about process and activities in the shelters, reducing the individual items into conceptually coherent and meaningful categories is critical not only to better understanding and communicating best practices, but also to facilitate further statistical analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis is used to identify larger dimensions of shelter operations (use of volunteers, training for staff, facility characteristics, and cleaning procedures); shelter activities (dog and cat enrichment, community presence, humane education); and, adoption procedures (fee structures and services provided with the animals). Individual activities are not simply disconnected parts but are combined in systematic ways to form general patterns of practice. This is important to understand when thinking about best practice guidelines and how shelters implement them on the ground.

**Chapter 5**, Relationships Among Shelter Traits and Activities, presents the relationships between traits of the shelters and best practice activities and also discusses correlations among best practices. This addresses questions about what types of shelters are most likely to engage in best practices and whether traits such as resources, staffing, organizational nature of the shelter, and age and quality of the facility relate to best practices. It also answers the question of whether the “rich just get richer” in the sense that the same better resourced shelters are able to engage in all types of best practices across the board or whether, for example, a lack of staff or monetary resources can be compensated for by well-trained and dedicated volunteers. Many aspects of shelters such as the number of volunteers and how they are deployed, how animals are labeled and promoted, whether transfers in or out are done, and adoption policies and prices, are malleable. Decisions on these issues are not fully constrained by resources or whether the shelter is in a rural or urban area, for example. How shelters balance their constraints and opportunities can be critical to success.

**Chapter 6**, What Shelter Activities Are Associated With Positive Outcomes?, addresses the central research question about the potential relationships between shelter traits and practices and outcomes. It begins with a discussion of what being a “successful shelter” means in terms of outcome variables. The difference between the richness of what success means and the reality of what data are available to measure it is also addressed. Based on comparable data in the state of Michigan, outcomes used in the analysis include save rates over time and change in save rates, complaints to the state regulating authority, and annual state inspection reports. Perceived success as indicated by shelter directors on the survey is also assessed. Thus, outcomes both in the minds of directors and more objective, standardized data are combined to provide a sense of success and the activities and processes that appear related to it. Statistical models are provided to explain both average kill rates and reduction in kill rates over time. This latter analysis is vital in that it shows what activities are linked to reductions in kill rates suggesting how shelters of a variety of types and organizational and resource capacities might act to improve their live release rates. Because the most improved shelters are not yet necessarily the “best” in the state, the chapter highlights those activities that appear effective in moving shelters across the spectrum from poor to improving outcomes which is something any shelter can aspire to.

**Chapter 7**, At the Speed of Trust: Profiles of the Most Improved Shelters, and **Chapter 8**, There Are Many Ways to be

the Best: Profiles of the Most Improved Shelters, present profiles, site visit data, and the results of interviews with directors at the shelters that consistently have the lowest kill rates and those that have shown the greatest reduction in kill rates over a 4-year period. This provides a more in-depth look at what shelter directors feel is most important in contributing to their success. Four shelters of each type (best and most improved), representing different sizes, organizational structures, capacities, geographic locations, and resources are profiled in these chapters. The qualitative analysis allows for more in-depth exploration of issues raised in the survey, for discussions to probe beyond the questions included on the survey, and for shelter facilities to be assessed first hand. In a sense these interviews and site visits allow for a human (and animal) face to be placed on the more impersonal data derived from the statistical analyses. It also allows shelter directors to be able to express, in their own words, why they think their shelter has been or is becoming more successful over time. Because it is impossible to anticipate all important questions even on the most carefully constructed survey questionnaires, these chapters provide vital information about success from those that know their fields and shelter the best.

The concluding [Chapter 9](#), The Many Paths to Success: It Is a Journey Not a Destination, summarizes the findings and provides recommendations and directions for future research. Recommendations and future research speak to different target audiences. For shelter directors and staff, the recommendations provide a potential road map for improving practice to promote more successful outcomes. And, a variety of recommendations are provided so that many are applicable in a variety of different types of shelters. If becoming the best in class is not possible due to resource constraints, there are still many recommendations that can at least lead a shelter toward improved outcomes. The recommendations also provide information to animal welfare advocates and concerned citizens about what their local shelters can and should be doing. Identification of future research questions emanating from the analyses here speaks to the needs of researchers in the field of animal welfare studies and points to gaps and shortcomings in knowledge and data and how they might be addressed going forward. As was noted at the outset of the introduction, sheltering best practice is constantly changing. Thus, continuing research is critical both to keep up with those changes and also to explore more extensively those activities that appear to lead to shelter success in terms of saving the most animals possible.

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## BEST PRACTICES IN ANIMAL SHELTERING

There are no federal guidelines or organizations that regulate animal shelter practices. Many (but not all) states have shelter guidelines and regulations but these differ widely from state to state; many shelters are under municipal control or are operated by nonprofits. As of 2010, only 18 states required animal shelters to be registered or licensed (ASV, 2010). Thus, professional associations have promulgated best practice guidelines for animal shelters and animal care and control organizations. These include the National Animal Care and Control Association (NACA), the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV), the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), the Society of Animal Welfare Administrators (SAWA), and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). The ASPCA Shelter Care Checklist for implementing ASV guidelines is particularly useful as it organizes practices by what shelters “must” and “should” do. It also provides “ideal” practices as well as those that are “unacceptable” (ASPCA). Generally, guidelines are organized around 10 categories of shelter design, practice, and process: nature and maintenance of the facility; data management; population management and procedures when capacity is reached; animal care; health and emergency protocols; use of volunteers; animal enrichment; adoption practices; staffing and training; and community relations. Each of these is discussed below.

### Nature and Maintenance of the Facility

While, ideally, all shelters should have “state of the art, compassionate housing for dogs, cats and other companion animals designed to limit disease transmission and stress” (NACA, 2014, p. 10), many municipalities and humane societies cannot realistically hope to operate in a state-of-the-art, purpose-built

facility. Nevertheless, facilities should strive to include as many best practices as possible. These would include: isolation areas for sick animals so that they do not spread disease; visual and sound separation between species, ages, and sexes and between nursing mothers and other animals to reduce stress; be located in an area accessible to the public and away from environmental hazards or industrial land uses that may threaten the health of staff and animals; have kennels that are easy to clean and sanitize; and, limited or no use of stacked cages which are often small, difficult to clean, and create stress when animals on the top have to be lifted out for cleaning and exercise. It has been recommended that shelters using single small cages phase them out since the smaller spaces increase stress, do not allow for physical activity and play, do not allow the animal to keep distance from its waste products, and require that animals be moved for cleaning (Weiss, Miller, Mohan-Gibbons, & Zawistowski, 2015). Wire-mesh cage bottoms should also be eschewed for both dogs and cats since they are uncomfortable and not easily cleaned. Animals should have a soft place to lie down, and cats a place to hide. Light and darkness variation should be provided to support natural rhythms of sleeping and wakefulness (SAWA, 2017).

Research has indicated that provision of cohousing options in the facility can lead to reduction in noise, behavioral problems (both in the shelter and after adoption), and stress (ASPCA ([www.aspcapro.org/resource/8-tips-brushing-your-canine-communication-skills](http://www.aspcapro.org/resource/8-tips-brushing-your-canine-communication-skills)); Mertens & Unshelm, 1996; SAWA, 2017; Weiss et al., 2015). However, HSUS guidelines do not recommend cohousing unless the animals are carefully evaluated and monitored. Cage and kennel minimum sizes have been recommended: 4 feet by 6 feet for dogs and 9 square feet for cats (HSUS). Generally, cages should be large enough to allow standing, turning, movement of head without touching the top of the enclosure, lying comfortably, and room to assume a comfortable posture for eating, drinking, urinating, and defecating (ASV, 2010). “Capacity for care” models have provided recommendations for larger cat cage size and design that optimize the number of cats that can be in the shelter at one time while also providing sufficient space for a cat’s sanitary and mental needs to be met, generally implying a two compartment unit (Karsten, Wagner, Kass, & Hurley, 2017). In an experimental test of the implementation of a specific cat capacity model (C4C) in several Canadian animal shelters it was found that increasing housing size and lowering the daily population increased adoptions and reduced time to

adoption and euthanasia (Karsten et al., 2017). While it is not possible for many shelters to limit their animal populations, research has indicated that limiting choices for adopters can increase adoptions (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000).

HSUS has also promulgated recommendations for the control of human traffic within the shelter including staff office space, public spaces for adoption, surrender, or reclamation, separation of the euthanasia room and animal storage (freezers) from public areas, and accessibility for disabled individuals. Hand sanitizers should be available in both the public and animal care areas for staff, volunteers, and visitors. These represent a very inexpensive way to help ensure that humans are not acting as foci and passing disease from one animal to another as the result of petting them or through saliva.

While some of these facility attributes are expensive to change, gradual replacement of smaller kennels, hand sanitizers, designation of an isolation area (even if it does not have separate air circulation or handlers), and varying of light and dark are relatively low- or almost no-cost ways to improve the health and safety of shelter animals.

## Data Management

Clearly defined procedures to identify animals and maintain records are necessary. Animal records should include: a unique identifying number, description, microchip number if present, source of animal, dates of entry and departure, outcome, species, age, gender, and medical and behavioral information ideally including notes from the owner if relinquished. Photographs of incoming animals are particularly important as they help owners find lost pets but also aid in adoption (ASPCA, 2009). All medical care provided should be documented for each animal and the record should allow for the inclusion of notes and the results of behavior testing to identify any issues and assess adoptability (<http://aspcapro.org/resource/saving-lives-behavior-enrichment-research>). While keeping records is facilitated by the use of computers and software programs designed for use in shelters (such as Chameleon or PetPoint), even shelters lacking computer equipment can maintain complete records of their animals. There are a variety of sources of free inventory management software (<https://pro.petfinder.com/shelter-software-guide/>).

## Population Management

It is strongly recommended that “each holding facility evaluate and determine its capacity and manage the population through safe adoption, transfer, foster or euthanasia in order to maintain a humane, healthy, and safe population” (NACA, 2014, p. 6). While this implies that euthanization may be necessary to avoid operation beyond capacity, alternatives such as transfer programs and foster care are strongly recommended solutions to overcrowding and potential spatial mismatches between supply and demand (such as the high number of puppies in southern shelters and the demand for puppies among potential adopters in the north). Transfer of dogs and cats from shelters to rescue organizations has been shown to increase adoptions and thus reduce euthanizations (Morris & Gies, 2014). When transfer programs are used, guidelines suggest careful isolation and medical assessment processes to avoid the spread of disease (ASV, 2010). Ensuring that transfer partners (particularly those that pull from shelters) are licensed or registered 501 c3s is an important part of the transfer program. When euthanasia cannot be avoided, it should be done via lethal injection of sodium pentobarbital by trained personnel, either a veterinarian or certified euthanasia technician ([www.petfinder.com/pro/for-shelters/general-statement-euthanasia/](http://www.petfinder.com/pro/for-shelters/general-statement-euthanasia/); [www.nacanet.org/?page=Euthanasia](http://www.nacanet.org/?page=Euthanasia)).

Local animal control policies can also have an impact on population management. Best practice guidelines for local animal control ordinances include recommendations that cats as well as dogs be licensed and microchipped to control stray and feral populations. For shelters, Trap Neuter and Return (TNR) programs have also been recommended as a method of controlling or at least managing stray and feral cat populations. Research on cat TNR programs has found that they reduce shelter intake of cats and kittens and hence the potential of their getting euthanized, stabilize and ultimately reduce feral cat populations, lessen behaviors likely to lead to citizen complaints such as spraying and fighting, and protect human health through reduction in rabies (Levy, Isaza, & Scott, 2014; Moldave & Rhodes, 2013; Natoli et al., 2006; Weiss et al., 2015). Spaying/neutering of all animals prior to leaving the shelter is recommended (ASV, 2010). Research in Hawaii has indicated that companion animal overpopulation, and hence intakes at shelters, can be reduced by low cost sterilization and microchipping, and that dog leash laws and cat identification programs can reduce intakes and facilitate adoptions from shelters (McDowell, Burns, & Lepczyk, 2011).

The implementation of a robust transfer program would benefit from the leadership of a staff member but could be organized by a volunteer under conditions of scarce resources. TNR programs typically require the purchase (or donation) of appropriate traps but are run and implemented by volunteers at many shelters.

## Animal Care

A daily cleaning routine is included in both the HSUS and ASPCA guidelines with the latter breaking out activities by morning, afternoon, and closing duties (2009). It is recommended that animals should be separated from the cleaning, preferably in a different part of the kennel or, less ideally, moved to a different kennel or cage. Indoor/outdoor access is ideal for both cats and dogs. Toys, litter boxes, bedding and dishes should be disinfected although animals staying in the same enclosure with the same toys may require less frequent disinfection. Animals should never be tethered in lieu of being in a “primary” enclosure. To minimize the transmission of disease the order of cleaning should be: healthy puppies, kittens and nursing mothers, healthy adult animals, sick animals. Fresh water should be available at all times with containers cleaned regularly. Cats should have constant access to dry food; HSUS guidelines ([www.hsi.org/assets/pdfs/eng\\_guidelines\\_operation\\_shelter.pdf](http://www.hsi.org/assets/pdfs/eng_guidelines_operation_shelter.pdf)) also include specific suggestions for diet and feeding schedules using stainless steel bowls to minimize disease and storage in air-tight plastic containers so that food does not spoil or become a target for rodents.

The ASPCA standard operating procedures ([www.aspcapro.org/sites/pro/files/generic-sop-manual\\_0\\_0.doc](http://www.aspcapro.org/sites/pro/files/generic-sop-manual_0_0.doc)) include specific recommendations for animal handling safety for cats, dogs, and all animals. These include removing a cat from a kennel, holding the cat, and how to address fear issues. Dog recommendations include removing the dog from the kennel, proper leashing techniques, recognizing and reacting to signs of fear, and how to ensure that dogs do not interact with each other (except during supervised play groups).

## Policy and Procedures and Health and Emergency Protocols

Best practices include the creation of both a mission statement and policy and procedures to achieve that mission. A

detailed list of 49 basic recommended elements of a policy and procedure manual has been identified by the NACA (2015, pp. 36–38). All employees should be aware of these policies and indicate that awareness through signing the policy documents.

Shelters should have both a general disaster plan and a plan for medical emergencies or outbreaks of disease. Model infection control plans are available from the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology ([www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Products/maddies-infection-control-manual-for-animal-shelters.php](http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Products/maddies-infection-control-manual-for-animal-shelters.php); [www.apic.org/.../Shelters\\_Disasters.pdf](http://www.apic.org/.../Shelters_Disasters.pdf)). Guidelines suggest that all animals entering the shelter be evaluated and observed for health issues and be kept isolated from the current population; some guidelines recommend that 10% of the facility's animal housing capacity should be devoted to isolation with separate air circulation from the rest of the shelter (ASV, 2010; New Zealand, 1993). This would include animals that are stray and relinquished and those arriving via a shelter transfer. All animals should be inspected daily for medical or behavioral concerns (CFA, 2009).

Recent research has shown that upper respiratory infections in cats are not an inevitable outcome of being in a shelter. While isolation is important upon intake, how cats are housed also affects disease transmission. Providing double-sided cages that do not require that the cat be moved for cleaning can reduce both stress and the propensity for the transmission of disease (Wagner, Kass, & Hurley, 2018).

Because shelters vary widely in resources, the extent of veterinary services available also differs. At a minimum each animal should have a health evaluation at intake to identify signs of disease or problems that require immediate attention (UC Davis, 2009). If there is no veterinarian on site full time, then staff members need to be trained to conduct initial medical screenings and administer vaccines. The ASPCA manual of standard operating procedures provides a specific recommended medical protocol for incoming animals (2009). A set of core vaccines have been recommended by several sources and should be administered upon intake; modified live viruses are preferred (AAFP, 2009; AAHA, 2007; ASV, 2010). Vaccinations should include rabies when a longer stay is anticipated and is given as a matter of course in many shelters. Parasite preventatives should also be administered upon intake as many animals entering shelters have internal and external parasites (Bowman, 2009). Appropriate pain treatments should be offered. Medical rounds should be completed at least every 24 hours and behavioral condition should be assessed daily. A necropsy to

determine cause of death should be performed in cases of unexpected death although that may be beyond the means of many shelters (ASV, 2010).

While having a dedicated veterinarian or veterinary staff is ideal, this too may exceed the resources of many shelters and those with small numbers of animals may not find it necessary. Part-time veterinarians, shared services among multiple shelters, or even the use of volunteer veterinarians can help ensure that the medical needs of animals in the shelter are being met.

## Volunteers

Most formal shelter best practice guidelines are noticeably silent on the use of volunteers. Particularly with staff and resource constraints, volunteers are a critical part of shelter care and success. The ASPCA has developed two webinars on use of volunteers (<http://aspcapro.org/resource/best-ideas-attract-keep-and-grow-volunteers>). They include how volunteers can contribute to the mission of the organization via fund raising, sharing the work load, and enhancing awareness in the community. They also make clear that recruiting, training, and supervising volunteers is a challenging activity that requires strong staff support and likely a dedicated staff person, at least on a part time basis. Recommended elements of a volunteer program include an agreement or volunteer contract including a liability waiver; identification of tasks; general and specific training for different tasks; termination and discipline policies; a tracking and record keeping system for volunteer training, activity, and hours; methods for recognition and appreciation; and safety procedures. The HSUS also provides guides for recruiting, managing and training volunteers, including the development of a junior volunteer program ([www.animalsheltering.org/search/site/volunteers](http://www.animalsheltering.org/search/site/volunteers)).

One of the most critical parts of the development and implementation of a volunteer program is to define the roles that they will fulfill. The specific mix will depend on the needs of the shelter and staffing levels; ideally staffing would include a dedicated volunteer coordinator. That position could be filled by a volunteer which is, however, less than ideal because of the need for tight connections between shelter staff and the volunteer program. Recommended volunteer roles include: dog walking; dog training; kennel assistance (cleaning, watering, dishes, laundry); cat comforting/interaction (petting, playing with toys); office administration; greeting of public; adoption

assistance and counseling; outreach and events support; assistance with managing the volunteer program; transport team; vet clinic assistance; fund raising; animal photography; foster care; community outreach and humane education; and grounds maintenance (HSUS) ([www.animalsheltering.org/page/bringing-volunteers-board](http://www.animalsheltering.org/page/bringing-volunteers-board)). It should be noted that not all professional associations recommend that volunteers participate in kennel and other cleaning tasks since specific protocols are needed to ensure that animals are protected from disease and thus cleaning is an activity that should be left to staff unless absolutely necessary due to resource constraints. Finally, it is important to assess the experiences of volunteers regularly to allow them to have input to the shelter and also identify any areas where changes to training and use of volunteers are needed or whether the relationships between volunteers and staff need attention; a sample survey of volunteers is available from the [SAWA \(2017\)](#).

## Animal Enrichment

The nature of required animal enrichment activities varies with the length of the stay; longer shelter time requires more enrichment. A systematic behavior evaluation should be conducted at intake and should be used to guide the types of enrichment and training required to enhance adoptability and shorten shelter stays ([SAWA, 2017](#)). There has been a good deal of discussion in both the professional and academic literatures on the “best” behavior testing methodology to employ with little agreement. Many shelters have used the formal methods to devise systems that work within their specific context ([D’Arpino, Dowling-Guyer, Shabelansky, Marder, & Patronek, 2012](#)). [Weiss et al. \(2015\)](#) provide a useful side-by-side comparison of a number of behavior testing systems (141). Consistency, standardization, and sufficient training on the methodology appear key ([Weiss et al., 2015](#)). Research has suggested that free choice profiling might be combined with more standard behavioral assessments such as the SAFER test to provide more in-depth information on the emotional state and needs of dogs ([Arena, Wemelsfelder, Messori, Ferri, & Barnard, 2017](#)). Adoption satisfaction and retention appears enhanced when more detailed knowledge about the animal’s behavior is provided prior to the adoption ([Neidhart & Boyde, 2002](#)). Ultimately, it has been suggested that “shelter evaluations may tell us as much or more about the effect of the shelter as they

do about the individual dogs” because dog behavior is impacted by stress, environmental conditions in the shelter, the nature of the staff conducting the test, proximity of other animals during the test, how soon after intake the test is performed, and so on (Weiss et al., 2015, p. 143).

Animals should be provided with regular social contact with humans, mental stimulation, and appropriate physical activity (ASV, 2010; Coppola, Grandin, & Enns, 2006; ILAR, 1996). Recent research has suggested that even 15 minutes of human interaction a day can lower cortisol (indicating stress) levels in shelter dogs although interaction was more effective with stray than owner relinquished dogs and did not appear to affect which animals were selected for adoption (Conley, Fisher, & Hemsworth, 2014; Willen, Mutwill, MacDonald, & Schiml, 2017). Other research has confirmed the effectiveness of enrichment programs in reducing stress in the shelter (Kry & Casey, 2017; Menor-Campos, Mollada-Carbonell, & Lopez-Rodriguez, 2011; Wells, 2009). Minimum best practice standards recommend that dogs should be exercised in runs twice daily or walked on a leash for at least 20 minutes twice daily (HSUS, [www.hsi.org/assets/pdfs/eng\\_guidelines\\_operation\\_shelter.pdf](http://www.hsi.org/assets/pdfs/eng_guidelines_operation_shelter.pdf)). Foster care is often the best method to ensure that very young animals are properly socialized (Griffin & Hume, 2006; McMillan, 2002; SAWA, 2017). The ASPCA (2009) provides explicit guidelines for developing and implementing a dog walking protocol. Use of a play yard for “fetch” activities and physical exercise is also recommended.

The challenges of enrichment for cats are different than those of dogs. Research has indicated that owner-surrendered cats show higher levels of behavioral stress and arousal, are more likely to be euthanized due to medical issues, and are more likely to develop upper respiratory illnesses while in the shelter (Dybdall, Strasser, and Katz, 2007). This suggests that cats relinquished by their owners may have a greater need for foster care or more intensive human interaction once in the shelter (Dybdall et al., 2007). The provision of hiding boxes in cat cages has been found to help newly admitted cats adjust to the shelter (Vinke, Godijn, & van der Leij, 2014).

Training programs are recommended to address behavioral issues but also as a means of socialization as well as mental and physical activity (Laule, 2003). There is a distinction between enrichment and behavior modification, however. The former focuses on stress reduction and physical and mental health while in the shelter, the latter involves efforts to change an animal’s behavior, which requires staff or volunteers with

higher levels of training and skills (SAWA, 2017). Aversive methods of training, such as the use of choke collars should be avoided; training should be based primarily on positive reinforcement (APDT, 2003). For longer shelter stays enrichment would ideally include foster care, outside activities (for dogs) including play groups (Griffin & Hume, 2006), toys including puzzle feeders for mental stimulation, scratching posts, and human interaction. Individualized treatment programs are recommended for behavior modification, again based on positive reinforcement.

The ASPCA guidelines provide detailed recommendations for the operation of a foster care program (2009). These include guidelines for identifying animals for foster (animals with treatable medical conditions, very young animals) for example. Fostering for behavioral issues and for hospice care is also common. Volunteers used for fostering should receive proper training along with a foster contract that specifies shelter practices; standard home visits for potential fosters are also desirable.

Enrichment for dogs should include a variety of items and activities, taking into account the individual preferences of the animals. They should be regularly monitored for effectiveness (SAWA, 2017). Cognitive, feeding, physical, sensory, auditory, visual, olfactory, and taste enrichment are required along with novel experiences. Daily enrichment for dogs should include a comfortable place for sleeping, a chew item, access to at least one new toy, social interaction with humans and/or other dogs, and physical exercise. Indeed, research has indicated that the presence of toys in kennels, even if the animal does not play with them, increases the likelihood of adoption. Daily cat enrichment should include a comfortable place to sleep, a scratching surface, at least one new toy, a place to hide, a place to perch, social interaction with humans, and physical exercise in the form of feathers or laser lights for example (SAWA, 2017). The SAWA also provides lists of auditory, olfactory, visual, and mental enrichment options ([http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.sawanetwork.org/resource/resmgr/files/Animal\\_Enrichment\\_BP\\_June\\_20.pdf](http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.sawanetwork.org/resource/resmgr/files/Animal_Enrichment_BP_June_20.pdf)).

Many of these enrichment activities are relatively low cost, can be done by volunteers, with supplies donated by the public (bedding, toys, scratching posts) or can be hand crafted. Most shelters have enough space for a play yard which might be created with donated supplies and labor. Walking dogs around the shelter site is often possible although there may be liability issues in urban locations. Foster care programs are clearly more resource intensive as they typically require staff coordination

although there are shelters that use a volunteer to run their programs. Because some sort of approval and assessment process is needed to ensure that foster homes are suitable for the animals and that fosters have not overburdened themselves with animals (particularly if they are fostering for different organizations), some level of staff oversight is typically required.

## Adoption Practices

Professional best practices include not just the enforcement of animal control ordinances and housing stray animals but also providing for community humane education and adoptions. The success of an adoption and the potential for the animal to remain in its adoptive home over the long term are associated with a number of aspects of the adoption process, including spay and neutering (ideally prior to the animal leaving the shelter), vaccinations, adoption follow-ups, provision of basic information on training the new pet, opportunities for trial interactions with animals already in the home, provision of temperament assessments, and behavioral training and socialization. Research on recent adopters in Australia indicated that adoptions were more likely to be successful if shelters carefully assessed and matched dogs to adopters and provided training while the dogs were in the shelter or facilitated training once the dogs were in their homes (Marston, Bennett, & Coleman, 2005).

Adoption processes should include an application or survey, involve the whole family, and incorporate consultation with adoption staff or volunteers regarding issues such as the match between the particular animal and potential adopters, behavior and medical issues, introducing the new animal to existing animals in the home and so on. Other research has suggested, however, that shelters should be cognizant of barriers to adoption such as long applications, waiting periods, and references (Fantuzzi & Weiss, 2010). More “open” adoption processes would take “a conversational approach” with open-ended questions about life style and experiences with prior pets (Weiss et al., 2015, p. 270). Thus, rather than having potential adopters scale a series of potential barriers, shelter staff or volunteers would have a discussion with the goal being one of approving an adoption with a good match between animal and adopter. This discussion should also make clear that the shelter is ready to and has resources for assisting with any issues that develop after the adoption (Weiss et al., 2015), implying that adoption

processes also must include follow-up. Shelters should be proactive in contacting adopters at various points to see what medical or behavioral issues have arisen and provide resources for addressing those issues so that animals stay in their new homes. Using email surveys is an inexpensive method of doing this, requiring the least amount of staff/volunteer time. Questionnaires could include the following: animal adjustment, health, behavior, thoughts about relinquishment, need for assistance, adopter satisfaction with their animal match, quality of life for the animal, development of a bond between the animal and its new family, customer service experience during the adoption, and general attitudes about the shelter (Weiss et al., 2015, p. 304). Encouraging adopters to continue to engage with the shelter is a good approach for retention but also for potential donations and volunteerism. Adopters could be encouraged to post “happy tails” about their animal including photos in the new home.

Ideally a dog interaction would be conducted at the shelter between the new and existing dogs, particularly for “protective breeds” such as Rottweilers, Dobermans, German Shepherds, and pit bull mixes (ASPCA, 2009). Back-up applications should also be accepted in case the primary adoption falls through for any reason. The shelter should be prepared to decline applicants. Adoption contracts should be signed and all medical information and other documentation provided. ASPCA guidelines recommend nonrefundable adoption fees, with the possibility of a manager override (2009).

Recent research has also provided some recommendations related to the pricing of animals at shelters. Shelter and rescue pricing systems should vary based on several critical dog traits. Specifically, puppies and pure-bred dogs can be priced at a premium while older, mixed breed and black dogs should be priced at a discount. Other traits such as potential medical conditions do not appear to need to be discounted. Higher prices can also be charged for dogs that are microchipped prior to adoption (Reese, Skidmore, Dyar, & Rosebrook, 2017).

Matching potential adopters to animals, conducting open adoption interviews that require more in-depth conversations, and following up with adopters are all time intensive activities that require staff or volunteer resources. While it may be difficult for shelters to devote these resources, the payback in terms of lower return and hence intake rates appear to make the investment worthwhile. Since shelters typically do not make money off of their adoptions and rarely recoup the costs of care for the animals, proactively varying adoption fees to discount

attributes of hard to place animals should move them out of the shelter more quickly with little loss of revenue. Charging premiums for puppies and pure-bred dogs that are likely to be highly adoptable can help subsidize the care of other animals. And, investing the time in careful adoption processes and following up with adopters pay back in terms of good community relations, donations, and additional volunteers.

## Staffing and Training

The NACA has provided a formula for determining kennel staffing needs based on the human population of the service area, incoming animals per day, animals in the shelter per day, and care times of 15 minutes per animal (nine for cleaning and six for feeding) to determine minimum staffing needed. This guideline however does not account for any activities beyond basic cleaning and feeding. These minimum times are then multiplied by three to account for other maintenance such as laundry and dishes. Further, staffing for activities such as enrichment, volunteer coordination, humane education and so on are not included in these minimum guidelines.

Staff should be properly trained prior to beginning tasks, continuing education should be provided, and all training documented (ASV, 2010). Recommended training for shelter personnel can be extensive and varies with the nature of specific organizations (animal controls with cruelty and rescue responsibilities versus limited intake humane societies and other rescues for example). Thus, recommended training can include topics ranging from use of bite sticks, to scene assessment, to vehicle safety, to dog training and enrichment, and interacting with the public and volunteers. Training should also include recognizing stress, pain, suffering, and adaptation to the shelter.

Training, support programs, and job rotations are recommended for staff involved in performing or affected by euthanasia in animal shelters. Compassion fatigue is a serious problem among shelter vets and staff leading to turnover and sometimes suicide: “the work has been identified as being demanding and stressful due to its complex nature, and requires staff to take responsibility for difficult and emotional decisions, including around euthanasia” (Baran et al., 2009; Cohen, 2007; Schneider & Roberts, 2016; Stavisky, Brennan, Downes, & Dean, 2017, p. 489) (<http://cdn.barkpost.com/good/compassion-fatigue-animal-workers/>). Higher shelter euthanasia rates and the nature of the process (whether there is a separate room, whether other animals

are present) can increase employee turnover while employing euthanasia only in cases of medical or behavioral need can reduce it ([Rogelberg et al., 2007](#)). This is in part the result of the “caring-killing paradox” whereby shelters workers are simultaneously asked to care for and euthanize the animals in their care leading to mental distress and turnover ([Arluke, 1994](#)).

## Community Relations

One of the most important roles of animal shelters is to provide humane education in the communities they serve. This might include education programs in schools, presentations to children in the shelter including tours and hands-on animal interaction, community education about the importance of spay/neuter and provision of information about clinics, presentations to and tours for community groups and in venues such as nursing homes (which could include visiting animals), and junior volunteer programs. Shelter presence at local events is also recommended which could be in the form of informational booths or dogs available for adoption. This can increase community awareness, help recruit volunteers, increase adoptions, and raise funding. Many of these activities can be done by volunteers thus freeing up staff resources for other activities. Further, community humane education can lower intake due to animal retention and the prevention of unwanted litters.

## Summary

As noted previously, best practices in animal sheltering and welfare are constantly evolving—the forgoing review provides only a summary of recommendations at one point in time. Indeed, it was not so long ago that there were no professional organizations for animal care officers or shelter managers and hence, no professional standards for shelter practices and procedures. Historical analyses point to the rise of urban animal control from the 1800s, with anticruelty statutes becoming common in the 1860s ([Brady, 2012](#); [Huss, 2007](#)). Prior to this, conceptions of a “chain of being” focused regulations on “useful” animals such as horses and cattle, and to an extent dogs; cats had no legal status and were viewed as vermin ([Brisbin & Hunter, 2016](#)). Early regulations emphasized concerns over rabies, particularly in the summer months, bounties placed on the capture of dogs, conditions at local pounds (or the prison for dogs), and euthanasia practices ([Brady, 2012](#)). Indeed, the

concerns about rabies were so great that disposal of unclaimed stray dogs was seen as a public health issue and many shelters or “pounds” (including Detroit Animal Control) were constructed near rivers so that dogs could be killed in drowning tanks. Conflict over the role of animals in the city and the entities responsible for regulating urban animals were evident in the media in the early years of the country with the New York Times arguing that the law, not dogs, was the problem, while Harper’s Bazaar suggested that the dogs taken to the pound were “mere worthless mongrels” (Brady, 2012, p. 14). Media coverage of the social problem of dogs in the city shaped and reflected larger social and intellectual changes in attitudes about the role and value of animals, a growing middle class with Victorian morality regarding the admirable qualities of dogs, a shift in attitudes about patronage to a more public-regarding ethos, and the institutionalization of nonprofit or voluntary organizations in the provision of public services (Brady, 2012; Huss, 2007; Wang, 2012). Largely, however, the history of animal welfare and control is one of “ad hoc responses” and little effort to develop systematic legislative or programmatic efforts (Huss, 2007; Zawistowski, Morris, & Salman, 1998).

The evolution from the drowning tank of the late 1800s and early 1900s to the current professionalization of the field of animal sheltering is almost revolutionary. It should be remembered, however, that the ability of individual shelters to meet best practice guidelines is evolutionary and dependent on a variety of factors including resources, knowledge of shelter or municipal leadership, number and nature of staff and volunteers, and partly on the will and desires of the communities shelters serve. The following chapter lays out the methodology for the study and begins to develop a profile of the breadth of shelters and shelter practices in the State of Michigan. It paints a picture of great variety in shelter resources, size, and organization that potentially could affect the ability to meet best practice recommendations.

## Check List for Recommended Best Practices

While recommendations include state-of-the-art facilities and shelter locations that are accessible to the public, it is unreasonable to expect that most shelters have the option of changing these attributes. Thus, the check list below focuses on elements of best practice that most shelters should be able to address.

- ✓ Nature and maintenance of the facility:
  - Create isolation areas for sick animals, ideally with separate air circulation if possible.
  - Allow for visual and auditory separation between species.
  - Use kennels that are easy to clean and sanitize.
  - Phase out single, small cages when possible.
  - Phase out cages with wire mesh bottoms.
  - Provide beds and hiding places.
  - Consider cohousing options for appropriate animals.
  - Have kennels/cages that are large enough that animals can move in species specific ways.
  - Have separate spaces for staff, adoptions, intake, and euthanasia.
  - Provide hand sanitizers for staff, volunteers, and the public.
- ✓ Data management:
  - Keep records of all traits of animals upon intake.
  - Include photographs and microchip numbers if present.
  - Include owner relinquishment notes if possible.
  - Document all medical issues and treatment.
  - Document all behavioral issues.
  - Document results of behavioral assessment.
- ✓ Population management:
  - Determine shelter capacity.
  - Provide fostering and transfer as options when capacity is reached.
  - Facilitate licensing of animals if that is within the responsibility of the shelter (i.e., those with animal control functions).
  - Implement TNR programs for cats.
  - Spay/neuter all animals before they leave the shelter.
  - Provide microchipping for all animals.
- ✓ Animal care:
  - Implement a daily cleaning routine that meets HSUS/ASPCA guidelines.
  - Separate animals from the area being cleaned.
  - Disinfect all toys, litter boxes, bedding regularly.
  - Have a designated order for cleaning.
  - Follow professional guidelines such as those provided by HSUS for feeding.
  - Use recommended procedures for removing dogs and cats from kennels.
  - Train staff on these procedures.

- ✓ Health and emergency protocols:
  - Create mission and policy and procedures statements (see NACA guidelines).
  - Create disaster plans for both disease outbreaks and natural disasters.
  - Isolate all animals coming in to the shelter.
  - Provide a medical examination for all incoming animals.
  - Administer core vaccines at intake.
  - Administer parasite preventative at intake.
  - Inspect all animals daily for medical concerns.
  - Use double-sided kennels for cats if possible.
- ✓ Volunteers:
  - Provide proper orientation and training along with a contract for behavior, confidentiality.
  - Define roles for volunteers that include hands-on animal care.
  - Designate a staff member or volunteer for oversight of the volunteer program.
  - Assess volunteer experiences regularly and provide avenues for volunteer input.
- ✓ Animal enrichment:
  - Systematically assess behavior at intake; train staff to conduct this assessment.
  - Provide regular social contact with humans as well as conspecific interaction if appropriate.
  - Provide at least two opportunities daily for dog exercise; see the ASCPA guidelines for a dog walking protocol.
  - Use foster care for young animals, medical, and behavior issues, for shelter breaks, and for animals not doing well in the shelter.
  - Consider dog training programs that focus on positive reinforcement.
  - Provide toys, chew toys, feeding toys, and rotate frequently.
- ✓ Adoption practices:
  - Try to match potential adopters with animals.
  - Consider open adoption processes which lower barriers and incorporate two-way discussions.
  - Follow up with adopters to assess their experience, identify medical and behavioral issues, and provide resources.
  - Conduct dog interactions.
  - Consider proactive pricing systems that account for differences in animals.

- ✓ Staffing and training:
  - Use a staff formula to determine needs (see NACA formula).
  - Fully train staff before beginning tasks.
  - Consider cross-training and job rotations.
  - Be aware of and provide resources for compassion fatigue.
- ✓ Community relations:
  - Provide adult and child humane education via staff or volunteers.
  - Be present in the community by attending events.
  - Consider junior volunteer programs.
  - Bring the community in to the shelter for tours, events, days of service.

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## METHODOLOGY

This chapter lays out the legal background of animal sheltering in Michigan and provides a discussion of the nature and role of local animal control ordinances. These are critical in setting the ground rules for shelter operations and provide a framework of oversight and expectations for shelter activities. The methodology for the study is also discussed along with a description of the shelters in the dataset. Data were collected for the project using both an online survey of the population of animal shelters in Michigan and site visits and interviews at both exemplary shelters and those that are most improved in terms of save rates. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods constitutes a nested or mixed-method approach that provides the breadth of large N statistical analyses along with the depth of case studies. Nested designs also allow for the use of the quantitative data to guide the selection of case studies as has been done here. The case analyses can also be used “to assess the plausibility of observed statistical relationships between variables, to generate theoretical insights from outlier and other cases, and to develop better measurement strategies” (Lieberman, 2005, p. 435). In short, while the quantitative data clearly show which shelters have experienced the greatest drops in kill rates and also identify general correlates of reductions in kill rates, the efforts of individual shelters, or “transformative change” as one director called it, are visible only through qualitative interviews with shelter personnel on the ground. Thus, the survey data are presented first to show overall trends and relationships in shelter traits and practices and the case studies follow to provide both a check on and deeper interpretation of that statistical analysis.

### The Case and Legal Environment

Licensed animal shelters in the state of Michigan represent the population for this study. Michigan was selected for several reasons. First, the author has long standing ties with local organizations involved in animal welfare and thus has a deep

understanding of the case. Second, Michigan has been used in prior research to extrapolate animal welfare data to national conditions suggesting that it is a representative case for animal sheltering in particular (Bartlett, Bartlett, Walshaw, & Halstead, 2005). Third, it is a case where state legislation regarding animal welfare and control is antiquated and detailed state-level regulations lacking. This, combined with the fact that Michigan is a strong home rule state, leaves municipalities and humane organizations with wide latitude (and hence potential variation) in the construction of animal control ordinances, shelter organization, and activities and practices. Finally, the use of a population of shelters within a single state also controls for state enabling legislation and general state economy and culture regarding animal welfare.

## State Guidelines and Model Policy

Michigan statutes set the enabling parameters for local ordinances and shelter practices by identifying the minimally required elements of local animal control policy. Counties and municipalities can then go beyond these regulations to further define animal control and sheltering. State statute is based on the Michigan Dog Law of 1919 whose purpose was to establish a licensing system for dogs (Minor revisions have been made to various sections of this law in 1969 and 1970). The law contains three primary categories of regulation: licensing and registration of dogs (viewing dogs as property that needed to be identified in case of loss); regulation of animal control facilities and pet shops; and concerns over bites as evidenced by a discussion of dangerous dogs. While the state requires that all dogs over 4 months be licensed, vaccinated for rabies, and wear a collar and tags, much of the language in the statute identifies what county or municipal entities *may* do such as hire animal control officers (ACOs) and establish animal control facilities. The statute is largely silent on many aspects of model ordinances. Table 3.1 summarizes Michigan statute and the elements of model animal control ordinances based on recommendations from: the National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA, 2005), the American Veterinary Medical Association, the State Bar of Michigan, The Association of Professional Dog Trainers, and the National Animal Care and Control Association (NACA) that emphasize model policy that protects both the public and the well-being of the animal populations ([www.naiaonline.org/pdfs/NAIA\\_Model\\_Animal\\_Control\\_Law](http://www.naiaonline.org/pdfs/NAIA_Model_Animal_Control_Law); [www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Documents/avma-model](http://www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Documents/avma-model); <http://www.nacanet.org/>

### Table 3.1 Michigan Statute Compared to Model Ordinances

|                                                               | Michigan Statute                                  | Model Ordinance               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Dog licensing                                                 | All dogs over 6 months, later changed to 4 months | All dogs over 3 months        |
| Rabies vaccination                                            | Required for license                              | Required for license          |
| Collar and tags                                               | Required                                          | Required                      |
| Service dog fee exemption                                     | Required                                          | Yes                           |
| Incentives and fee reductions                                 | Silent                                            | Yes                           |
| Voluntary cat licensing                                       | Silent                                            | Yes                           |
| Definition of dangerous dogs                                  | Yes                                               | Yes                           |
| Adjudication process DD <sup>c</sup>                          | Yes                                               | Yes                           |
| Remediation DD                                                | Yes                                               | Yes                           |
| Definition of vicious dogs                                    | No                                                | Yes                           |
| Adjudication process VD                                       | No                                                | Yes                           |
| Remediation VD                                                | No                                                | Yes                           |
| ACOs                                                          | Optional                                          | Yes                           |
| Qualifications of officers                                    | Required if have ACOs                             | Yes                           |
| Animal shelters                                               | Optional                                          | Yes                           |
| Limitations on # animals                                      | Silent                                            | Not recommended               |
| Nuisance regulations                                          | Only for roaming <sup>a</sup>                     | Variety of behaviors included |
| Limits on tethering                                           | Silent                                            | Yes                           |
| Dogs must be confined                                         | Silent                                            | Yes                           |
| Animal welfare advisory board                                 | Silent                                            | Yes                           |
| Prohibitions on dog fighting                                  | Silent                                            | Yes                           |
| Regulations on proper care                                    | Silent                                            | Yes                           |
| Regulations on impoundment                                    | Silent                                            | Yes                           |
| Regulations on pet shops and breeders                         | Yes                                               | Yes                           |
| Provision for killing of dogs if molesting livestock          | Yes                                               | Silent                        |
| Provision for the killing of unlicensed dogs running at large | Yes                                               | No                            |
| Breed Specific Legislation                                    | Silent                                            | No                            |
| Required bite reporting <sup>b</sup>                          | Silent                                            | No                            |

<sup>a</sup>State nuisance language only refers to dogs roaming while model policies would include noise from barking, defecation and so on.

<sup>b</sup>It should be noted that both Michigan and model regulations are silent on the issue of mandatory reporting of dog bites. Since only about 17% of bites are actually reported (Shuler, DeBess, Lapidus, & Hedberg, 2008), it is impossible for communities to track the actual risk of bites, bite risk hotspots, circumstances surrounding bites, and the dogs (and their owners) that perpetrate bites. Thus, including mandatory bite reporting has been recommended by public health research (see Vertalka et al., 2018).

<sup>c</sup>DD, dangerous dog; VD, vicious dog; and BSL, breed specific legislation.

[?page=NACA\\_Guidelines;](#) [connect.michbar.org/animallaw;https://apdt.com/about/position-statements/](https://connect.michbar.org/animallaw;https://apdt.com/about/position-statements/)). Taken together, these professional associations represent respected sources of model policy. Similar, but more detailed, recommended ordinance provisions are also outlined in [Aronson \(2010\)](#). Based on these recommendations, a model ordinance should include the following elements:

- Pet licensing and rabies vaccination requirements that provide incentives (a free ride home from animal control if lost) or fee reductions to owners who demonstrate desired care behaviors (microchips, fencing, spay/neuter, Canine Good Citizen certificate) and waivers for service animals. Cat licensing is not recommended as it is seen as unenforceable, particularly in regards to feral or community cats. Voluntary cat licensing could be implemented with discounts for microchipping, spay/neuter, and keeping cats indoors.
- Limitations on the number of animals in the home is not recommended by the NAIA because it is unenforceable and may cause owners to avoid licensing, although other guidelines do include population limits to ensure adequate care and limit public nuisances ([Aronson, 2010](#)).
- Detailed dangerous dog language that includes a distinction between levels of risk—dangerous/vicious or potentially dangerous/dangerous—and meaningful penalties. Definitions of at-risk or potentially dangerous dogs should be included and should refer to animals that have menaced humans or other animals while off the owner's property or that have attacked or bitten a person on the owner's property causing a less than severe injury. Procedures, including an appeals process, for determination of an at-risk dog should be included along with sanctions and restrictions for owning such a dog (secure fencing, microchips, proof of liability insurance and so on) and a process for removal from the at-risk list. Dangerous or vicious dogs are those that have inflicted a severe injury without provocation. Again definitional language, determination and appeals processes, sanctions (which might include euthanasia), creation of a registry of dangerous dogs, and a process for removal of the designation should be included. Using breed of dog as part of the definition of at-risk, dangerous, or vicious is not recommended. The Association of Professional Dog Trainers has promulgated detailed recommendations for dangerous dog ordinances which closely follow those of the NAIA ([apdt.com/about/position-statements/model-dog-law](https://apdt.com/about/position-statements/model-dog-law)).

- Nuisance regulations for excessive barking, soiling of public or private property, and requirements to pick up pet waste. Language should include penalties such as increasing fines for repeated violations of nuisance regulations.
- Confinement and control regulations to ensure that animals are confined to prevent escape from the home, that dogs are on a leash while off the owner's property, that tethering be limited to confined areas and that time on a tether be limited, and that animal control personnel can remove a dog or cat in a vehicle if they are endangered.
- Creation of an animal control or animal welfare advisory board.
- Specific prohibitions on dog fighting and other forms of animal cruelty.
- Specific regulations regarding the proper care of animals/owner responsibilities including the provision of food and water, maintenance of sanitary living conditions, grooming, and health care.
- Details regarding the organization and nature of animal control services, impoundment processes, training of ACOs, and bite quarantines.

Other recommendations have gone beyond these best practice guidelines to encourage state policies that explicitly emphasize specific aspects of animal welfare over mere animal control. Some states include requirements that public animal control facilities transfer animals to rescue groups or humane societies (California and Illinois have such provisions, for example), that such entities be required to obtain non-profit status and/or be licensed by the state, that all animals being adopted from shelters be sterilized (including owned animals who have been running at large), language specifically addressing animal hoarding, and consideration of tax incentives or license fee differentials for owners who spay and neuter (Huss, 2007). In the area of animal cruelty, commonly prohibited activities include dog fighting, poisoning, maiming, sexual abuse, animal abuse/neglect, or leaving injured animals in roadways. Regulation of animal transporting, animal experimentation, and hunting or trapping is also common (Friend, 1974). Implementation and enforcement activities are causes for concern, however, often due to limited resources on the parts of many animal controls and shelters, the challenges of prosecuting cruelty cases, and the fact that enforcement often relies on citizen complaints (Brisbin & Hunter, 2016; Friend, 1974; Reese & Ye, 2016).

## Local Animal Control Ordinances

A recent study of local animal control ordinances in Michigan found that cities on the whole do not have animal control ordinances that follow best practice guidelines (Reese & Remer, 2017) (Table 3.2). The presence of the elements of model policy in local ordinances is reported in Table 3.3. Overall, the general finding is that a number of critical elements of model policy are rare among local ordinances in Michigan. The items in italics at the top of the table are those that are codified in state statute. As such they should be applied at the local level regardless of whether they are explicitly mentioned in city ordinances. There is a good bit of variation in the percentage of ordinances that are silent on or reiterate these policies. Thus, most city ordinances include specific definitions of dangerous dogs (64%) and require dog licensing (81%), and that dogs wear a collar with tags (74%). Ordinances tend to be silent on state requirements for conditions for owning dangerous dogs, license fee exemptions for service dogs, and mandatory rabies vaccination as part of the licensing process. Whether they are simply relying on state law or not locally enforcing these elements of animal law is impossible to tell.

Several aspects of model policy that are more closely related to animal welfare are also present in over half of the local ordinances. For example, 64% of cities include language that prohibits the abuse or neglect of animals, 59% explicitly indicate where stray dogs are taken when captured, and half require licenses for the operation of animal shelters. Finally, 50% of the ordinances include definitions of vicious dogs (separate from the definition of dangerous dogs).

The other 22 elements of ordinance best practices are present in less than 45% of the cities and several are included in just a few or even no cities. Requirements that license fees be devoted to humane education are present in just one percent of the cities and incentives for licensing dogs (some communities in other states have offered free rides home from animal control if a licensed dog gets loose or lost for example), regulations that stipulate appropriate animal care such as requirements for food, water, shelter, and health care, and voluntary licensing programs for cats are not included in any of the ordinances. Provisions for an animal control advisory board, prohibitions on leaving animals in hot or cold cars, detailed descriptions of abuse and neglect, prohibitions on dog fighting, discounted licenses for particular types of dogs (those that are micro-chipped, spayed/neutered, or that have passed canine good

**Table 3.2 Presence of Model Policy Frequencies**

|                                     | % No                     | % Yes                      |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Dangerous dog</i>                | <i>Silent = 36</i>       | 64                         |
| <i>Conditions for owning DD</i>     | <i>Silent = 69</i>       | 32                         |
| <i>Require dog license</i>          | <i>Silent = 19</i>       | 81                         |
| <i>Service dog exemption</i>        | <i>Silent = 86</i>       | 14                         |
| <i>Mandatory rabies vaccination</i> | <i>Silent = 64</i>       | 36                         |
| <i>Collar and tags</i>              | <i>Silent = 26</i>       | 74                         |
| Must be restrained                  | 7                        | 93                         |
| Owner responsible                   | 17                       | 84                         |
| Nuisance defined                    | 17                       | 84                         |
| Must clean up                       | 23                       | 77                         |
| Abuse/neglect                       | 36                       | 64                         |
| Restrictions on exotics             | 38                       | 62                         |
| Location for strays                 | 41                       | 59                         |
| Restrictions on #cats               | 46                       | 54 (mode = 3)              |
| Restrictions on #dogs               | 48                       | 52 (mode = 3)              |
| Vicious dog                         | 50                       | 50                         |
| Permits required for shelters       | 50                       | 50                         |
| Time limit on license               | 55                       | 45                         |
| Exemption for torment               | 60                       | 40                         |
| Allow chickens                      | 15 (prohibit), 48 silent | 36                         |
| Job description ACO                 | 65                       | 35                         |
| Require cat license                 | Silent = 68              | 32                         |
| Extent of detail on abuse/neglect   | 37 (not detailed)        | 31 (medium to high detail) |
| Evidence-based determination        | 75                       | 25                         |
| Require bite report                 | 77                       | 23                         |
| Limit tethering                     | 77                       | 23                         |
| Prohibit dog fighting               | 73                       | 21                         |
| Conditions on owning VD             | 82                       | 19                         |
| Fee discount                        | 85                       | 15                         |
| Can contract out                    | 14 (prohibit), 75 silent | 11                         |
| Require microchip                   | 91                       | 9                          |
| Mandatory spay/neuter               | 93                       | 7                          |
| BSL                                 | 89 (8% with conditions)  | 3                          |
| Fencing required                    | 97                       | 3                          |
| Prohibit leaving animals in car     | 97                       | 3                          |
| Advisory Board                      | 98                       | 2                          |
| Fees go to humane education         | 99                       | 1                          |
| Incentives for license              | 100                      | 0                          |
| Regulations on proper care          | 100                      | 0                          |
| Voluntary cat licensing             | 100                      | 0                          |

*N* = 92 drawn from [Reese and Remer \(2017\)](#). DD, dangerous dog; VD, vicious dog.

citizen classes), and limits on the amount of time dogs can be kept tethered out of doors are all part of the animal welfare protections in model policy but are relatively rare in local ordinances. The ordinances also tend to lack detail on processes that protect both the safety of the public (mandatory reporting of bite incidents, specific conditions for ownership of a vicious dog, requirements that yards be fenced) and the dogs (exemptions to dangerous and vicious dog classifications if a dog was tormented and evidence-based processes for determining if a dog should be classified as dangerous or vicious). Ordinances are also generally silent on several process issues such as whether the city can contract out for animal control or sheltering services and the job descriptions or qualifications of animal care officers. Only 3% of cities prohibit the ownership of particular types of dogs (i.e., pit bulls) and several communities have lifted their bans in recent years (<http://michpitbulleducation.org/bsl/>).

Generally, control issues are emphasized over animal welfare concerns, and policies are not sufficiently detailed to protect the community, animal guardians, or the animals themselves. This is obviously a serious concern both from an animal welfare and human health perspective. Risks from dog bites alone are substantial: they are among the top causes of nonfatal injuries and over half of children suffer a dog bite by age 12. Dog bites are a potential cause of rabies, infection, mental trauma, disfigurement and, in rare cases, death; over 40 zoonotic diseases in the United States can be passed from dog/cats to humans and the average cost of a hospital stay for a bite is \$18,200 (Vertalka et al., 2018). These risks can be mitigated by local ordinances that require and/or encourage the licensing of dogs, vaccinations, reporting of dog bites, processes for ownership of dangerous and vicious dogs, prohibitions on animal cruelty and dog fighting, for example. Inadequate animal control ordinances can lead to increased health risks from dog bites, lawsuits resulting from dog attacks, resident complaints about nuisance issues, improper care of and lack of protection for companion animals, and animal suffering.

## Shelter Licensing and Oversight

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) is charged with licensing and regulating animal shelters in the State. Not all rescues need to register as a licensed shelter. Organizations that must do so are those that meet the following definitions (MDARD, 2017) ([http://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-1569\\_16979\\_21260---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-1569_16979_21260---,00.html)):

- A municipality that operates a housing facility for the impoundment and care of dogs, cats, and other specific animals that are:
  - strays, lost, or surrendered by their owners;
  - impounded or otherwise being held for animal law violations.
- A person, a business, or a nonprofit organization that operates a housing facility for the care of dogs, cats, and other specific animals that are:
  - surrendered by their owners;
  - transferred or adopted from other shelters and otherwise homeless.
- Housing facilities that include a separate room, building, or area used to contain a primary enclosure(s) such as cages, kennels, or community cat rooms.
- Organizations that operate *solely* through a network of foster homes where the animal lives in the home as their pet do not qualify for a shelter registration as they do not have a housing *facility*.

Applicants for licensing must complete the form included in [Appendix A](#) and have their facility inspected by MDARD. There are health and safety requirements for the shelter facilities (for both animal and human protection) and requirements regarding vaccinations and medical treatment ([http://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-1569\\_16979\\_21260---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-1569_16979_21260---,00.html)). Each licensed shelter must file a report to MDARD by March 31 of every year providing data on the intake and disposition of animals including total adopted, transferred to other registered shelter partners, reunited with owners, and euthanized (reporting form is included in [Appendix B](#)). All licensed shelters are inspected once annually; shelters may receive a second inspection if certain violations are present. While all shelters are required to file the annual reporting form not all do so. MDARD can fine shelters that do not report, however, the small staff at MDARD is stretched just addressing the inspections and any complaints and they are loathe to fine a shelter that is already in trouble for fear that it will make the lives of the animals in the shelter worse. Detroit Animal Control did not file reports for many years, for example, and the concern that any action on the part of MDARD would just make conditions worse was expressed in an interview (Detroit Animal Control received a new Director in December of 2015 and became Detroit Animal Care and Control (DACC). At that point all MDARD reporting requirements were met.).

MDARD regulations on shelters are relatively minimal. There is a state stipulated hold requirement of 4 (business) days for animals coming into shelters without any identification and a 7-day hold if the animal has a collar, tags or microchip. MDARD has indicated, however, that it would not enforce these requirements (<http://www.hshv.org/site/PageNavigator/education/advocacy.html>). Further, different shelters in the state interpret the law differently in the case of cats with some shelters committed to the 4-day hold and others concluding that the hold time does not include cats. As of the writing of this book shelters are developing their own stray hold policies. The state does regulate holding periods for animals that have perpetrated a bite, mandating a 10-day holding period if the animal is alive and not showing signs of rabies.

## The Data

The population for this study is all licensed shelters in the State of Michigan based on a list of such shelters according to MDARD at the time the survey was conducted in the fall of 2016:  $N=165$  (The original list included 183 shelters but 18 either indicated they were no longer in operation or did not have any contact information.) An online survey was sent to the executive director of all licensed shelters in Michigan including a drawing for a variety of gift certificates to PetSmart for completing the questionnaire. Ninety-three shelters answered the survey for a response rate of 56%. The survey asked directors to report on characteristics of the facility, programs conducted, volunteers, staff and volunteer training, health care, adoption processes and fees, resources (staffing, budget, capacity), perceptions of barriers and facilitators, and assessment of their success in attaining goals. The questions were based on best practice guidelines promulgated by the NACA, the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV), the Society of Animal Welfare Administrators (SAWA), the Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). The full survey is provided in [Appendix C](#).

In addition to the survey, activity reports filed with MDARD for 2012–15 were collected as were inspection reports and complaints from 2013 to 2016. For the nonprofit shelters, Form 990s were collected for 2013–14. These data were collected for the population of shelters in the state and for those responding to the survey to allow for: (1) comparison of the responding shelters to the population on key variables and (2) assessment of

resources and kill rates for all nonprofit shelters in the state. Outcome variables for the study include kill rates for the years noted as well as perceived success expressed by shelter directors. Kill rates were calculated by dividing intake by shelter animals euthanized. While the shelter activity reporting forms ask that shelters report owner-requested and shelter euthanasia separately, most shelters do not collect the data in that fashion. Indeed, most of the reporting forms indicate that owner-requested euthanasia data were not collected. Thus, it is not possible to separate out the two types of euthanasia. This likely creates an element of error in the kill rates whereby they may be inflated by the inclusion of the owner-requested cases.

Further, intake and adoption numbers are not without problems. For example, some shelters count adopted and returned animals as a second intake and their subsequent “readoption” as a second adoption. Others do not record the second intake but do count the second adoption. Thus, shelters with many returns may have higher apparent save rates because they are double counting animals in this way. Because the Animal Shelter Annual Reports are self-reported there is no way to determine the validity of the data. Organizations such as the Michigan Humane Society (MHS) which has three shelters in different cities file a single report making it impossible to ascertain differences among the shelters in outcomes. In short, the outcome data from MDARD are far from perfect but are the only data available to explore save/kill rates for a range and number of shelters. The perceived success variable provides a check on the MDARD data, but again, perceptions may not match reality.

## Traits of Responding Shelters

The following data and discussion provide a profile of the animal shelters that responded to the survey with comparisons to the population where possible. Responding shelters tend to be well established with a mean age of 37 years; one shelter has been in operation for well over 100 years (Table 3.3). The ages of the facilities are slightly lower with a median of 17 years which is newer than the median age of 20 found in a study of Ohio shelters (Lord et al., 2006). Responding shelters were coded as being located either in a metropolitan area or in a more rural setting outside a metro area; 46% of the responding shelters are rural while 55% are urban. There is considerable variation in the total capacity in the shelters; the range for both dog and cat capacity is over 200 animals (also illustrated in the high standard deviations).

**Table 3.3 Traits of Responding Shelters:  
Interval Level Data**

|                             | Mean        | Median    | Minimum  | Maximum      | Std. Deviation |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|
| Age of organization         | 37          | 29        | 4        | 133          | 27.93          |
| Age of facility             | 25          | 17        | 1        | 100          | 22.05          |
| Dog capacity                | 38          | 26        | 0        | 250          | 43.42          |
| Cat capacity                | 54          | 40        | 0        | 200          | 47.03          |
| Other capacity              | 7           | 4         | 0        | 60           | 11.09          |
| Full time employees         | 6           | 2         | 0        | 90           | 12.26          |
| Part time employees         | 5           | 2         | 0        | 30           | 6.36           |
| Administrative staff        | 2           | 1         | 0        | 12           | 2.70           |
| Animal care staff           | 7           | 5         | 0        | 60           | 9.60           |
| Medical staff               | 1           | 0         | 0        | 30           | 4.23           |
| Volunteers                  | 74          | 30        | 0        | 700          | 126.24         |
| Volunteer hours             | 1636        | 500       | 0        | 174,000      | 2972.87        |
| Annual budget-self reported | \$407,142   | 200,000   | \$4500   | \$6,000,000  | \$849,383      |
| Total expenses              | \$584,976   | \$214,471 | \$16,727 | \$5,424,638  | \$963,373      |
| Total assets                | \$1,475,898 | \$622,020 | \$5203   | \$11,941,252 | \$2,369,212    |
| Total revenue               | \$690,558   | \$354,237 | \$20,728 | \$4,894,126  | \$1,018,438    |
| Contributions and grants    | \$447,969   | \$48,486  | \$15,018 | \$2,700,678  | \$647,736      |

Variation in the number of employees shows similar disparities from none to over 100 employees. On average the number of employees is relatively low at six full-time and five part-time staff; 15% of responding shelters have no full time and 22% have no part time staff. This conforms to previous research on rescue organizations in the Detroit metropolitan area which indicated a high number of rescues staffed by a few volunteers and typically the individual who founded the rescue (Reese & Ye, 2016) and with a study of Ohio shelters that found that 20% of animal control agencies had no full time staff (Lord et al., 2006). As with staffing and capacity there is great variation in the number of volunteers at responding shelters. While the mean is 74 volunteers, the range is from none to 700. Annual volunteer hours also vary significantly from none to 174,000; the mean number of hours volunteered annually is just over 1500. Ninety-seven percent of shelters provide adoption services in comparison to 79% in the Ohio study (Lord et al., 2006).

Self-reported budgets range from only \$4500 to \$6,000,000 with a mean of just over \$407,000. Medians are also presented in

the table and show the sensitivity of the means to extreme values in the capacity of larger shelters with higher budgets. In all cases median figures show more modest resource capacity in shelters across the state. Financial data were also collected from the Form 990s for the nonprofit shelters for the most recent year available (either 2013 or 2014). These data were not available for all the responding shelters but show mean expenses relatively close to those reported on the survey. These data also provide more detail on assets, revenue, and contributions and grants. As with the other financial data, wide variation across shelters is visible; there are stark differences in resources among the well and more poorly funded shelters. All of the financial data show means significantly higher than the medians indicating that extremely high values in some shelters have pulled the means high.

Form 990 data were also collected for the population of nonprofit shelters in the state and are provided in [Table 3.4](#). While revenue and expenses of the responding nonprofit shelters are somewhat higher than the state as a whole, assets are somewhat lower. There does not appear to be a consistent bias in the financial status of the responding nonprofit shelters versus the population of nonprofit shelters in the state. There are no comparable data for municipal shelters statewide.

Revenue sources are relatively uniform among the responding shelters with donations and fund raisers predominating ([Table 3.5](#)), although there are stark differences in the extent to which each source is used ([Fig. 3.1](#)). For shelters with county contracts, 14% receive the bulk of their revenue from those contracts. Contracts with cities to provide sheltering, clinic income, and merchandise sales are not common sources of revenue. Clearly, most responding shelters raise the majority or all of their revenue through the generosity of donors.

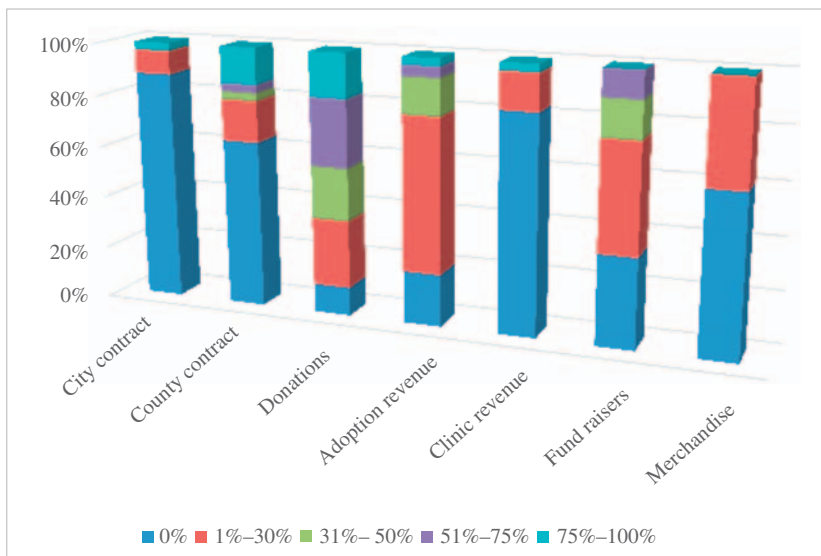
While the average number of animals admitted to responding shelters was relatively flat between 2012 and 2013 (at 1105

**Table 3.4 Form 990 All Nonprofit Shelters**

|                          | Mean        | Median    | Minimum | Maximum      | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------------|-------------|-----------|---------|--------------|----------------|
| Total expenses           | \$459,951   | \$205,584 | \$8911  | \$5,434,638  | \$788,681      |
| Total assets             | \$1,172,345 | \$399,733 | \$110   | \$11,941,252 | \$2,081,379    |
| Total revenue            | \$549,520   | \$256,243 | \$8973  | \$4,894,126  | \$862,570      |
| Contributions and grants | \$355,754   | \$144,338 | \$8204  | \$2,700,678  | \$553,773      |

**Table 3.5 Revenue Sources**

|                  | 0% | 1%–30% | 31%–50% | 51%–75% | 75%–100% |
|------------------|----|--------|---------|---------|----------|
| City contract    | 88 | 9      | 0       | 0       | 3        |
| County contract  | 64 | 16     | 3       | 3       | 14       |
| Donations        | 11 | 26     | 20      | 26      | 17       |
| Adoption revenue | 20 | 59     | 14      | 4       | 3        |
| Clinic revenue   | 83 | 14     | 0       | 0       | 3        |
| Fund raisers     | 34 | 41     | 14      | 10      | 0        |
| Merchandise      | 61 | 39     | 0       | 0       | 0        |

**Figure 3.1** Variation in revenue sources.

and 1087, respectively), numbers admitted dropped sharply between 2014 and 2015. This is a trend that has been observed generally in shelters in other states (Shore & Girrens, 2001). The decrease is more visible between 2013 and 2014 in admissions in the population of Michigan Shelters although both the population and sample shelters are seeing reduced admissions over time (Fig. 3.2).

Respondents were asked in separate questions about the nature of their shelter; there was no requirement that they just

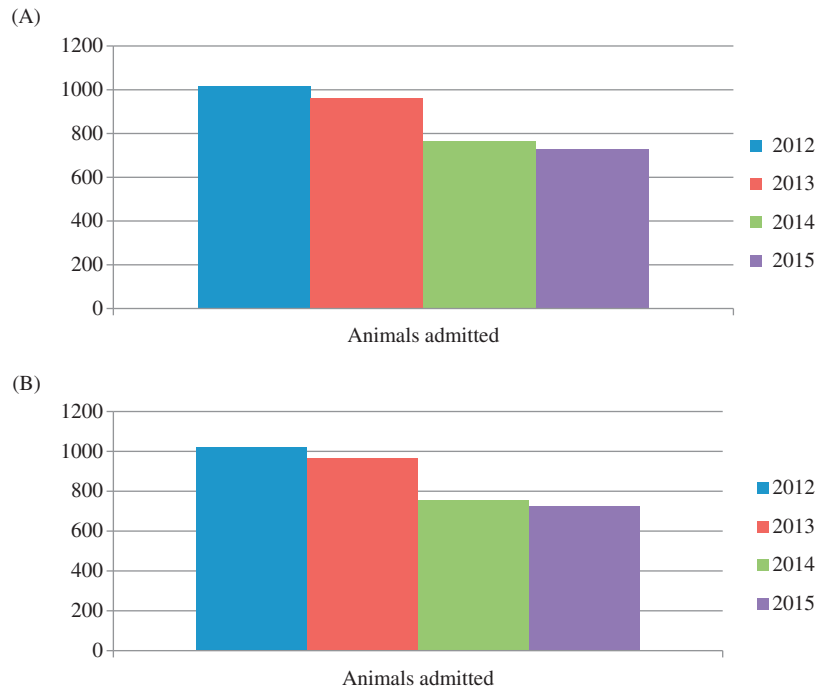


**Figure 3.2** (A) Average admissions survey respondents.(B) Average admissions population.

select a single response, that is, responses do not add to 100% nor are they mutually exclusive (Table 3.6 and Fig. 3.3). For example, DACC is an open intake, city shelter that also has a “friends of” nonprofit organization to take donations and organize volunteers. Open and limited intake shelters are roughly equal among the respondents—there is no state list of shelters by intake status so it is not possible to ascertain how representative this is of the population of licensed shelters in the state. The percent of respondents that are nonprofits with municipal contracts (23%) is much lower than reported in a 1999 HSUS survey of shelters of almost 44% (Clancy & Rowan, 2003). Almost none of the respondents were for-profit shelters and only 3% had a “friends-of” component. This latter feature can take on a variety of forms. Typically, the “friends-of” is a nonprofit associated with a municipal entity. In the case of the Dearborn Animal Shelter, the nonprofit “friends” hold the municipal contract and operate the shelter. For DACC, the “friends” engage in activities that the municipal entity is prohibited from doing by local ordinance such as fund-raising, accepting donations, and recruiting and organizing volunteers.

**Table 3.6 Traits of Responding Shelters:  
Nominal Data**

|                                      | % Yes |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Open access                          | 33    |
| Limited access                       | 34    |
| County shelter                       | 34    |
| City shelter                         | 10    |
| Nonprofit with municipal contract    | 23    |
| Nonprofit without municipal contract | 41    |
| Friends-of model                     | 3     |
| For profit                           | 1     |
| Have a mission statement             | 93    |
| Have an external Board of Directors  | 74    |

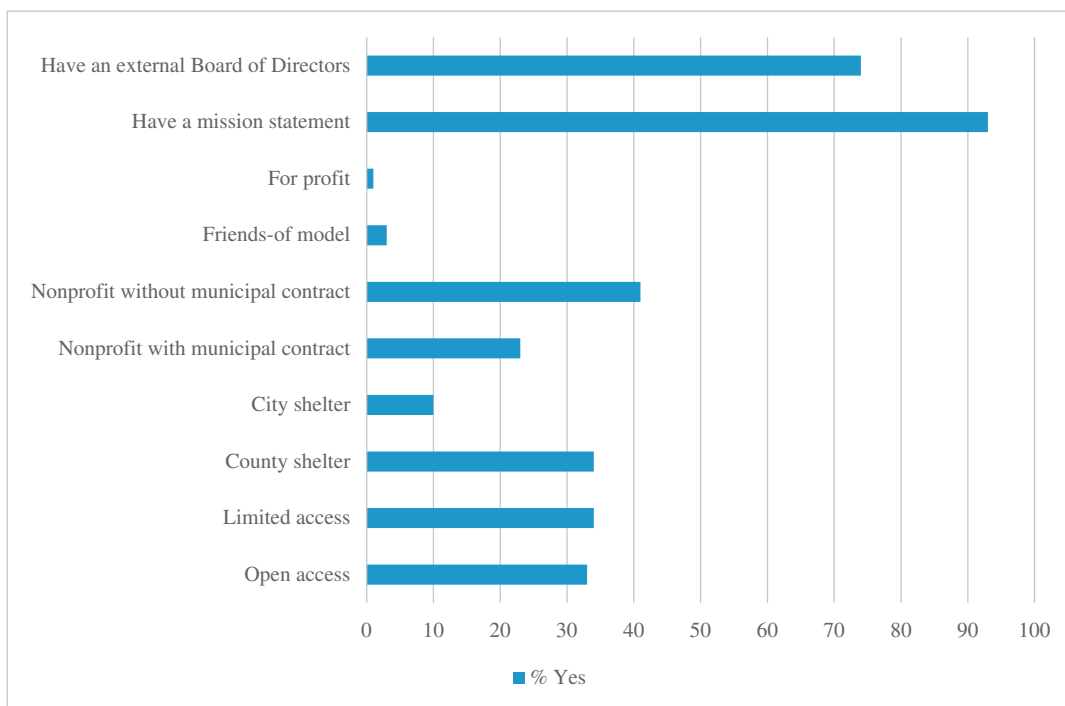


**Figure 3.3** Variation in organizational model.

The Friends of DACC have also recently begun to hold special adoption events at the shelter (as of 2018). Dogs are selected for the event by DACC staff and the Friends organize publicity and volunteers and approve adopters and collect the fees.

Most of the shelters have external Boards of Directors and almost all have mission statements. Mission statements in particular have been identified as an important aspect of shelter success in that they can increase donations and grants and serve as a management tool that directs shelter operations and increases cohesion among staff.

Generally, responding animal shelters focus almost exclusively on companion animals with a slight tendency for greater emphasis on cats (Table 3.7). Small mammals are also relatively common residents of shelters (Fig. 3.4). For municipal shelters such as DACC that receive mostly stray animals, cats and dogs almost exclusively predominate however stray snakes, chickens, and even alligators have arrived at the shelter for brief stays prior to transfer. For open intake shelters like HSHV that receive relinquished animals from a county-wide area, small mammals such as rabbits and ferrets are common residents and even hedge hogs have arrived as the result of hoarding cases. There are rescues in the state that focus on feral animals, farm animals, and wildlife but these do not tend to be organized as licensed shelters. Animal shelters receiving farm animals and exotics such as large reptiles and alligators tend to transfer them to such rescues.

There is a strong tendency for animals in Michigan shelters to come in as strays; cats are slightly more likely than dogs to be relinquished (Table 3.8 and Fig. 3.5). While few companion animals arrive via cruelty and rescue there is a good bit of transfer activity among shelters within the state and, for some larger shelters, from out of state transfer programs. The percentage of

### Table 3.7 Animals Served

|               | % Large Extent | % Moderate Extent | % Minor Extent | % Do Not Serve |
|---------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Dogs          | 77             | 11                | 4              | 8              |
| Cats          | 81             | 10                | 3              | 7              |
| Small mammals | 4              | 13                | 38             | 46             |
| Birds         | 0              | 8                 | 38             | 54             |
| Reptiles      | 0              | 3                 | 25             | 72             |
| Farm animals  | 4              | 8                 | 26             | 61             |

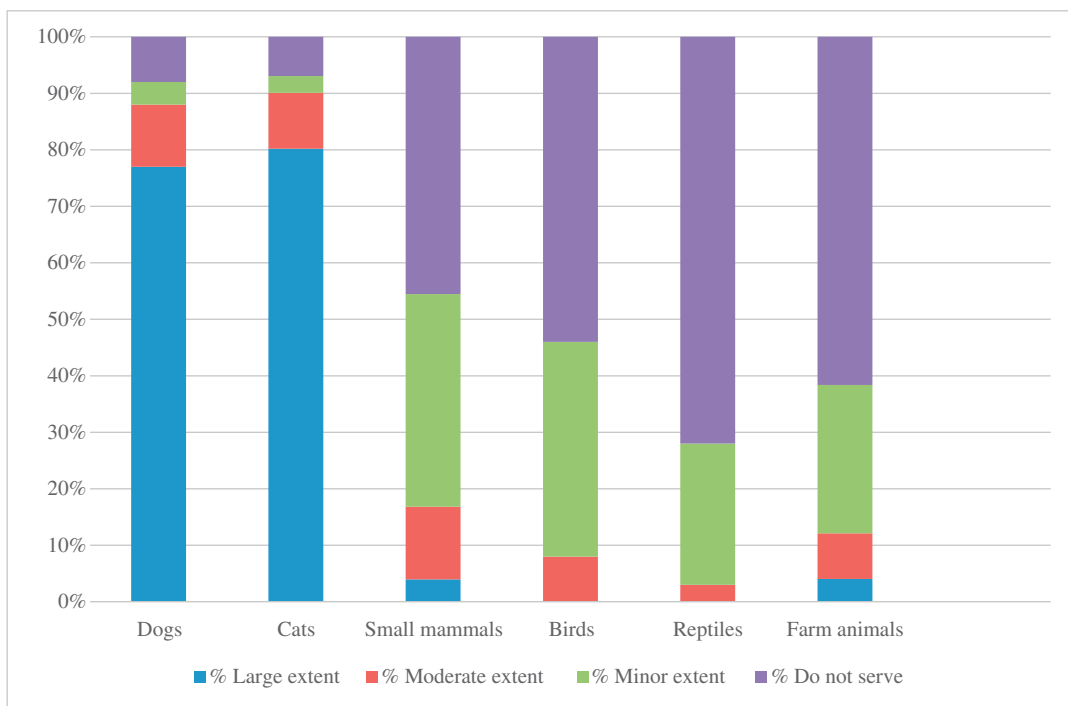


**Figure 3.4** Composition of shelter populations.

**Table 3.8 Sources of Animals in Shelter**

|        | Mean %/SD<br>Stray | Mean %/SD<br>Relinquished | Mean %/SD<br>Cruelty/Rescue | Mean %/SD<br>Transfer |
|--------|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Dogs   | 41/32.59           | 29/21.23                  | 9/18.81                     | 21/31.32              |
| Cats   | 42/34.65           | 38/31.46                  | 6/15.50                     | 13/28.53              |
| Others | 39/42.09           | 36/39.17                  | 12/26.00                    | 13/29.20              |

animals relinquished is quite close to the 29% found in Zawistowski et al.'s (1998) study suggesting relatively flat rates of relinquishment over time. Standard deviations for the percent of animals that arrive as strays tend to be larger than for other sources again illustrating the differences in shelters that only receive strays and those that also admit animals from other sources. Indeed, in areas where there is both a county animal control and a nonprofit humane society as is the case in

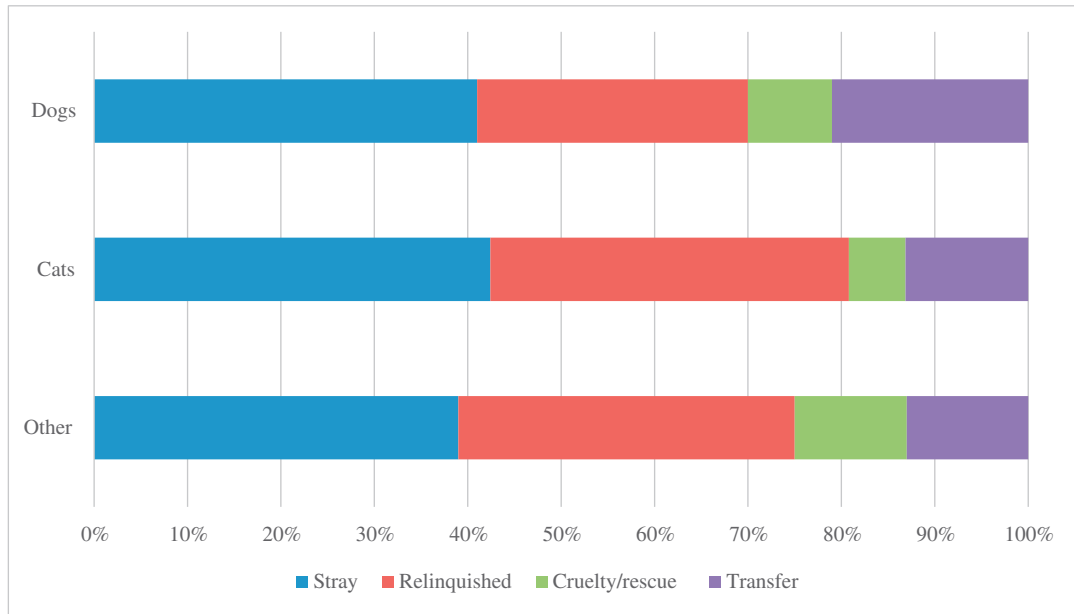


**Figure 3.5** Animal sources.

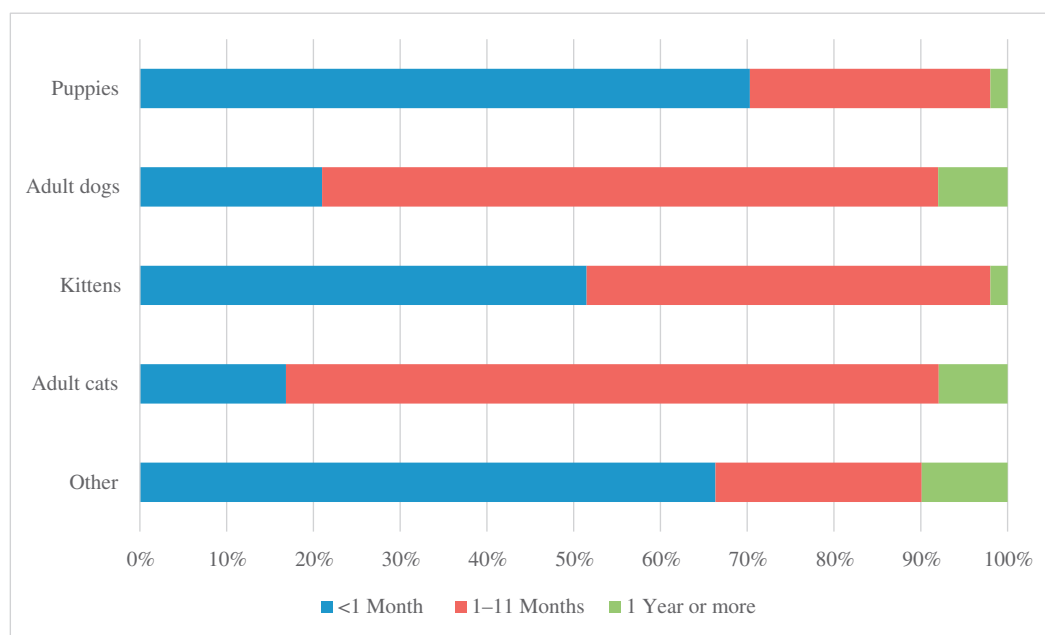
Livingston County, animal control receives most of the strays while the HSLC intakes animals from the community typically through wait-lists and transfers animals from other higher need shelters.

Average stays for animals in the responding shelters tend to range from 1 to 2 weeks to several months (Table 3.9 and Fig. 3.6). Only a small percentage of animals are in shelters for a year or longer. Puppies and kittens clearly get adopted more quickly; it is likely that the “other” animals are either transferred to specialized rescues or are adopted due to their novelty. Adult cats spend longer periods in shelters which is perhaps related to their higher euthanasia rate in Michigan (Bartlett et al., 2005).

There has been some research conducted on the potential correlates of longer shelter stays. For example, people report choosing their dogs for behavioral, size, and appearance characteristics (Marston, Bennett, & Coleman, 2005; Weiss, Miller, Mohan-Gibbons, & Vela, 2012). Friendly, calm, and submissive dogs are viewed as more adoptable (Wells & Hepper 1992; Wright, Smith, Daniel, & Adkins, 2007) and, thus, may experience shorter times in the shelter. Perceptions and related wait times based on appearance are complex, and recent experimental research suggests that *black dog syndrome*—the disproportionate failure of

**Table 3.9 Average Time in Shelter**

|            | Less Than<br>a Week | 1–2<br>Weeks | 1 Month | Several<br>Months | 1 Year | More<br>Than a Year |
|------------|---------------------|--------------|---------|-------------------|--------|---------------------|
| Adult dogs | 3                   | 18           | 46      | 25                | 3      | 5                   |
| Adult cats | 5                   | 12           | 27      | 49                | 6      | 2                   |
| Puppies    | 23                  | 48           | 25      | 3                 | 2      | 0                   |
| Kittens    | 11                  | 41           | 36      | 11                | 2      | 0                   |
| Others     | 30                  | 37           | 17      | 7                 | 3      | 7                   |

**Figure 3.6** Adoption wait times.

black dogs to be adopted—may capture attitudes toward more than coat color, as respondents make judgments about adoptability based on characteristics they associate with breeds rather than the color of a dog's coat or its size (Svoboda & Hoffman, 2015; Woodward, Milliken, & Humy, 2012). Various analyses of shelter adoptions in New York, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the US Pacific Northwest have found no difference in adoption rates between lighter and black coated dogs (Brown, Davidson,

& Zuefle, 2013; Goleman, Drozd, Karpiński, & Czyżowski, 2014; Sietou, Fraser, & Fraser, 2014; Svoboda & Hoffman, 2015), but previous results in the American context place a higher importance on coat color and overall appearance (Lepper, Kass, & Hart, 2002; Posage, Bartlett, & Thomas, 1998).

## Summary

Michigan state law is relatively minimal regarding the details of local animal control ordinances and the operation of animal shelters although there is a licensing process. As will be discussed more fully later in the book, state oversight of shelters is not as stringent as might be desired and local animal ordinances do not, as a whole, follow best practice guidelines. Generally, control issues are emphasized over animal welfare concerns, and policies are not sufficiently detailed to protect the community, animal guardians, or the animals themselves. There is a general trend across the United States in state preemption of local discretion in a variety of areas including bans on local plastic bag bans, prohibitions on local smoke-free ordinances, and in the case of Michigan, efforts to ban pit bull bans (<http://plasticbaglaws.org/legislation/state-laws/>; <http://mich-pitbulleducation.org/bsl/>). State legislators in Michigan have also variously proposed bills to enact statewide BSL and a very detailed dangerous dog statute (<http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2016/09/25/dog-bite-bill/91102166/>; <http://postalemployeenetwork.com/news/2016/09/michigan-representative-jon-hoadley-introduces-legislation-aimed-at-protecting-mail-carriers-and-others-from-dangerous-dogs/>). Thus, it is possible that state legislatures could mandate more elements of model animal control and sheltering policy. However, the mixed agendas at the state level to date suggest that this would be a hard sell and may also not incorporate best practices.

Based on the comparative data it appears that the sample of shelters responding to the survey does not differ significantly from the population of shelters on critical variables such as revenue and intake data. Thus, it does not seem that there is a response bias toward larger or more resourced shelters among the survey respondents. The shelter traits just discussed provide a portrait of the sample and some comparisons between the sample and the population where possible. One conclusion that can be drawn from traits of both the sample and the population is that there is wide variation among licensed shelters in the

state. Resources such as staffing, volunteers, and budget vary widely. Capacities also show significant variation. Organization models of shelters include a number of different options with regard to the nature of intake (open or limited) and whether the shelter is a public or nonprofit entity or has elements of both models such as nonprofit shelters with municipal contracts. These traits will be used in subsequent analyses to explore their relationship with shelter practices, activities, and outcomes specifically focusing on the question of whether the variations in resources, capacity, and structure affect ultimate outcomes in terms of perceived success and live release rates. The next Chapter focuses on describing the practices and activities of the responding shelters in the context of the best practice recommendations previously discussed in [Chapter 2](#), Best Practices in Animal Sheltering.

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## ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICES

The bulk of the survey focused on shelter practices and activities with the goal of assessing how closely animal shelters in Michigan adhere to best practices. The description of shelter practices is organized by the 10 categories of best practice recommendations previously discussed in [Chapter 2](#), Best Practices in Animal Sheltering. Several caveats are necessary at the outset. First, given the realistic limits on the length of a survey, there are many elements of the best practice guidelines that were not able to be included. The goal was to identify as many of the critical features of best practices as possible, acknowledging that the lack of research quantitatively correlating particular practices with outcomes makes it impossible to know with certainty that the most important recommendations were included. Second, the term best practices can be misleading since differences among shelters and their facilities and resources will necessitate some variation in how recommendations are implemented and indeed, whether they can be expected in all cases. Finally, there is no research on the exact number and combinations of “best practices” that are really necessary to lead to the most positive outcomes for animals, specifically higher adoption and save rates. Thus, this chapter presents the processes and activities in the responding shelters in the framework of general guidelines provided by academic research and professional associations as of the writing of this book.

### Nature/Maintenance of the Facility

Age of the shelter building can provide a general indication of the adequacy of the facilities. As animal welfare philosophy has evolved over the years, so have the standards of shelter design. Older buildings are unlikely to meet modern best practice standards. The average age of the responding animal shelter facilities is 25 years, although they range from 1 to 100 years old. It is important to recognize that shelters often have little to no control over the nature of their buildings. This is particularly the case for open intake municipal shelters that rely on the

revenue and facilities provided by their city or county. Up until the fall of 2016, Detroit Animal Care and Control (DACC) was housed in a building that met no essential standards for maintaining the health and welfare of the animals or people located there. Most dogs were in stacked, concrete boxes too small to move around in. Missing ceiling tiles, mold, holes allowing rodents to enter, and poor heating and ventilation were just some of the problems. There was no money provided in the city of Detroit’s budget for building and operations, much less repairs. The move to the old Michigan Humane Society’s building, donated to the city when MHS opened a newly built facility, created a sea change in sheltering and working conditions. Again, DACC had no control over the old facility (or indeed, over the new one) and staff and volunteers did yeoman’s work under exceptionally poor facility conditions. This case highlights that while facilities are clearly important, they are often out of the control of shelter administrators and are not totally determinative of the care provided the animals.

A common recommendation is that shelters should have nonporous floors that are easy to clean and that kennels should not have wire mesh bottoms. Despite their age, shelters in Michigan are meeting these best practice guidelines as over 90% of shelters have some or all floors of easily-cleaned nonporous materials (Table 4.1). Only 8% of shelters have any kennels with wire mesh bottoms which are not as comfortable for animals as solid floors that can easily accommodate raised beds. Shelters are not as compliant when it comes to some of the other best practice facility guidelines. While just over half of the shelters have all of their isolation areas on separate air circulation systems, 14% do not. The mean percent of the facility available for isolation of animals is 16%, which is higher than the 10% found in shelters in the United Kingdom (Stavisky, Brennan, Downes, & Dean, 2012). However, the median percent was also 10%. Having kennels with outside access is relatively

Table 4.1 Facility Attributes

|                             | % All | % Some | % None |
|-----------------------------|-------|--------|--------|
| Wire mesh bottoms           | 3     | 6      | 92     |
| Nonporous floors            | 87    | 4      | 10     |
| ISO separate air            | 55    | 14     | 32     |
| Kennels have outside access | 42    | 10     | 48     |

rare with 42% of shelters having such kennels and 48% having no kennels with outside access. Newer shelter facilities are significantly more likely to have kennels with outdoor access. All of the shelters have hand sanitizers available for staff and volunteers and 99% have them available for visitors. These are important so that no infections can be passed from animal to animal via human contact (i.e., so that humans are not acting as fomites).

Newer facilities are also significantly more likely to have been designed in such a way that sound is minimized, that cats are far enough away from dogs to minimize or eliminate sound, and that visual contact between dogs is limited. Forty-four percent of the shelter facilities have been designed to minimize sound. Sixty-two percent of the shelters have minimal dog sound in cat areas, while 23% have a great deal of dog sound in cat areas; only 15% have no dog sound in cat areas. Responding shelters appear less able to minimize sight lines among dogs; 25% have no visual contact between dogs, 40% have most enclosures without visual contact, and 35% are not able to minimize visual contact among dogs. It should be noted that under some circumstances visual contact between dogs can act as enrichment since it provides mental stimulation and something new to look at and hence has been recommended by some scholars (Weiss, Miller, Mohan-Gibbons, & Zawistowski, 2015).

Fig. 4.1 summarizes shelter infrastructure, clearly showing that nonporous floors and avoidance of cages with wire mesh bottoms are almost universal. However, separate air handling systems for isolation areas or for different parts of the shelter and kennels that give dogs an opportunity to go outside are far less common. Thus, expensive standards such as separate air handlers for different areas of the shelter are often not met in older shelters but less costly features have been generally implemented. And while kennels with outside access can provide visual and scent stimulation for dogs and help keep dogs house trained, they can also cause heat loss and humidity in the shelter which can increase expenses (Weiss et al., 2015).

It should also be noted that recommendations for isolation areas and minimization of sound and sight lines and even kennel sizes may be easier to meet when shelters are not at capacity. For example, DACC is committed to ensuring that adoptable animals are transferred to other shelters and rescues, implying that such animals are held in the shelter till placement is found. Yet, because it is an open intake shelter, capacity boundaries are often exceeded as new animals come in and others, deemed adoptable, await transfer. Although many of the

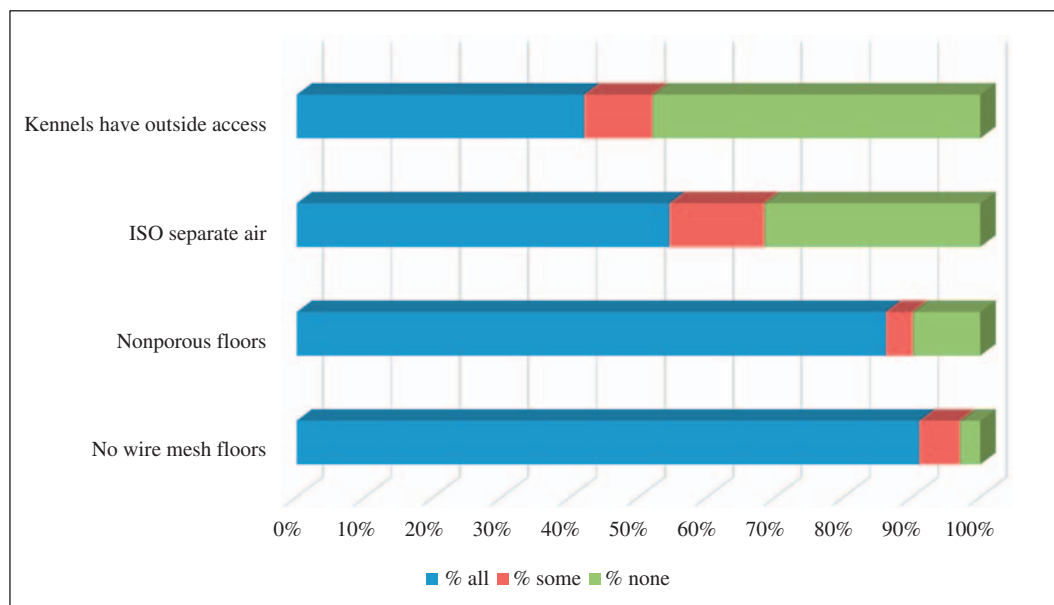


**Figure 4.1** Shelter infrastructure.

dog kennels are two-sided allowing dogs space and minimizing sound from nearby dogs, approaching or exceeding capacity means that there may be dogs on both sides of the guillotine door. Dogs also may spend time in temporary kennels in smaller rooms where, even using blankets, sight lines are difficult to obscure. When the trade-off at open intake shelters is not meeting sound or sight line guidelines or euthanizing adoptable animals, then in the short-term shelters such as DACC opt for the former.

## Data Management

Best practice guidelines outline the types of data that should be collected at intake. It is clear that these data are almost universally gathered in Michigan shelters (Table 4.2). The only standard that is not met by more than 95% of responding shelters is the recording of behavioral incidents, which occurs in 89% of shelters. Shelters are thus meeting best practice guidelines almost universally when possible. Collecting basic data upon intake is simple and low cost and can be done in shelters of all sizes and resource levels. While the complexity of the data collection systems may differ, basic information on incoming animals is kept in almost all shelters. It should also be noted

Table 4.2 Data Collection

|                        | % Yes |
|------------------------|-------|
| Intake data            | 100   |
| Length of stay         | 97    |
| Disposition/behavior   | 96    |
| Behavioral incidents   | 89    |
| Health status          | 100   |
| Description            | 100   |
| Breed estimate         | 99    |
| Owner background notes | 99    |

that some of these data, such as the numbers and types of animals, must be collected to enable shelters to file their annual activity reports with MDARD at the state level. These reports require identifying numbers of animals arriving at the shelter, the species of the animal, age (although not all shelters report puppies/kittens and adults separately as requested on the state form), and the outcome of the animal (adoption, transfer, euthanasia). Shelters that seek grants from entities such as Maddie’s Fund also keep a variety of data required in funding applications but not by the state. Differences in these data systems and the implications for measuring outcomes are discussed more fully in [Chapter 6, What Shelter Activities Are Associated With Positive Outcomes?](#)

Population Management

The average capacity of the responding shelters is 104 animals, with capacity ranging from 12 to 330. Fifteen percent of the shelters often operate beyond capacity and 42% sometimes do. While the implications of operating over capacity are clear (potential spread of disease, euthanasia, and lower quality of life for individual animals), operating below capacity can also be problematic because the needs of the community and its animals are not being fully met and potential adopters lack a range of options ([Gourkow, 2001](#); [Holt, Mover, & Brown, 2010](#); [Weiss, Miller, Mohan-Gibbons, & Vela, 2012](#)). Choosing to operate below capacity is typically an option only for limited intake shelters. At several points the HSLC was at less than half of their dog capacity due to concerns about staffing levels and skills.

This means that the wait-list for county residents wanting or needing to relinquish their pets was long and that only a limited number of dogs could be transferred in from partners such as DACC. One of the open intake shelters profiled in the site visit case studies to follow was significantly under capacity for both dogs and cats. There were many empty kennels and just a handful of animals. While this might be the result of advantageous conditions involving spay/neuter or animal retention in the county service area, it appeared that it was more likely the result of the shelter's policy of not accepting stray cats and refusing to accept dogs on transfer from other shelters (although they have supported surrounding counties in hording cases). Thus, the needs of local residents who find stray cats are not being met and assistance is not provided to struggling shelters like DACC, lowering animal welfare in the state generally.

When capacity at the shelters responding to the survey is reached only 1% often use euthanasia to create space; 84% never do (Table 4.3). Aside from euthanization, the differences in the other options to address over capacity situations are more visible in Fig. 4.2. While operating over capacity is obviously not recommended, the actions taken by shelters when capacity is reached show uneven application of best practice guidelines; 29% of shelters never send animals to foster or stop admissions (although open intake shelters do not have the latter option). Forty-three percent of shelters never transfer animals to other shelters and 31% do not transfer to other rescues. Nonprofit shelters without municipal contracts are significantly more likely to euthanize animals due to capacity constraints; there is no significant correlation between open or limited intake shelters and euthanizing for space. It should also be noted that there is no significant correlation between total capacity for animals and the need to euthanize for space. Thus, smaller, open intake shelters do not appear to have to euthanize

**Table 4.3 Methods to Address Capacity Issues**

|                     | <b>% Often</b> | <b>% Sometimes</b> | <b>% Never</b> |
|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Send to foster      | 30             | 41                 | 29             |
| Stop admissions     | 37             | 34                 | 29             |
| Transfer to shelter | 11             | 46                 | 43             |
| Transfer to rescue  | 20             | 49                 | 31             |

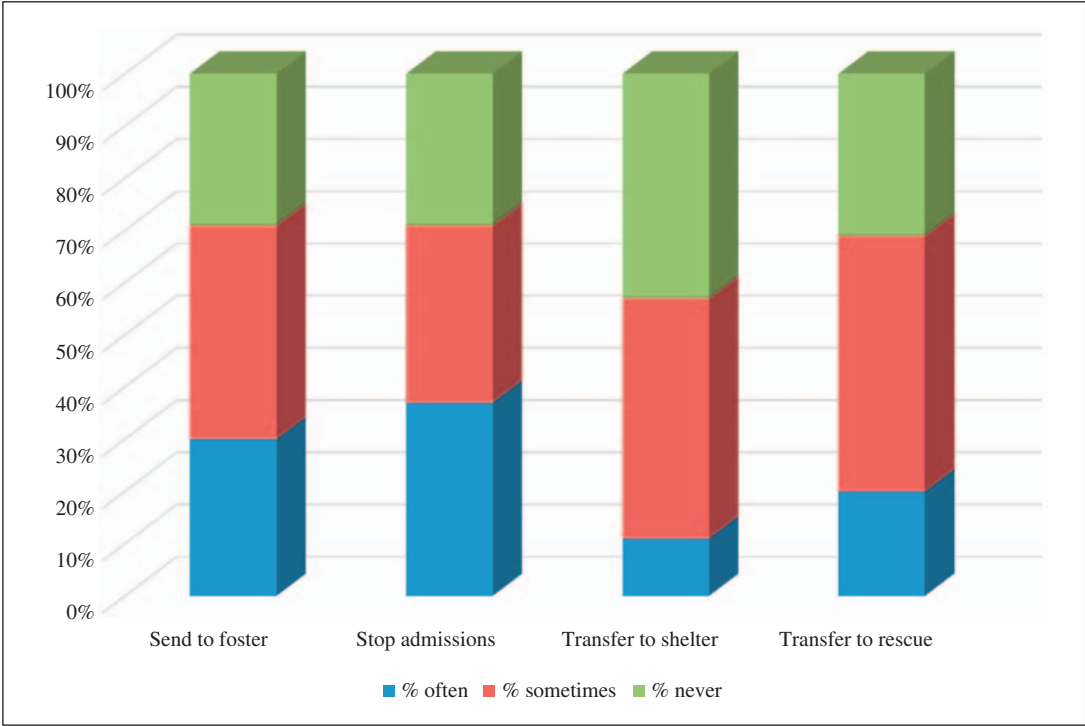


**Figure 4.2** Humane ways of addressing capacity constraints.

**Table 4.4 Who Performs Euthanasia?**

|              | % Always | % Frequently | % Sometimes | % Never |
|--------------|----------|--------------|-------------|---------|
| Veterinarian | 51       | 7            | 30          | 11      |
| Vet tech     | 3        | 8            | 16          | 73      |
| CET          | 27       | 17           | 9           | 47      |
| Other staff  | 0        | 0            | 2           | 98      |

more animals either because they transfer when necessary or make greater use of foster programs. Capacity limitations do not need to be addressed by euthanasia.

When euthanasia must be performed for any reason, guidelines recommend IV injection which is the policy in all responding shelters. Ideally this would be conducted by a veterinarian or a certified euthanasia technician (CET). Fully 78% of shelters always follow these recommendations. In half of responding shelters, euthanasia is performed by a vet and in over one quarter by a CET (Table 4.4). Personnel with unrelated training (vet techs or other staff) seldom are used for euthanasia.

Table 4.5 TNR Activities for Cats

|                    | % Yes |
|--------------------|-------|
| TNR                | 34    |
| Colony maintenance | 23    |

As far as the role of shelters in reducing the population of animals in the community more generally, 79% of responding shelters always require that all animals be sterilized before being released to adopters. An additional 16% often require that animals be sterilized prior to adoption. In some cases, dogs and cats too young for spay/neutering are released with a deposit that is returned upon proof that the adopter got the animal sterilized at the proper age. Relatively few of the responding shelters have trap-neuter-return programs to manage stray and feral cat overpopulation and as a result do not provide services to trap-neuter-return (TNR) colonies such as shelters, feeding, and ongoing medical care (Table 4.5). This is of particular concern since research has indicated that the presence of colony caretakers can reduce the chances of new cats at the colony since they can identify and trap them, and for kittens, allow them to get the necessary socialization to be adoptable (Weiss et al., 2015). However, the rate of TNR service provision here is much higher than in the Ohio study which found only 1% of animal control facilities doing TNR, raising the possibility that over the 10 years since that study, attitudes regarding TNR have changed (Lord et al., 2006) (The survey did not include a question about dog TNR since it is rare in the United States although practiced in some cities internationally. Some cities in Europe and Asia have begun to experiment with TNR for dogs, <http://www.thenature.ro/tnr-dogs.html>; <http://www.sPCA.org.hk/en/animal-birth-control/tnr-trap-neuter-return/tnr-trial-for-dogs>, <http://www.earthintransition.org/2012/08/indias-out-of-control-dog-problem/>).

Animal Care in Shelter

Shelters are relatively uniform in their cleaning and disinfecting schedules; the majority of shelters clean animal enclosures twice daily. Total disinfecting can occur less frequently if the

same animal is remaining in the same enclosure. Still, 85% of shelters disinfect enclosures at least daily (Table 4.6). Eighty-five percent of shelters have a specific order for cleaning based on the nature of the animals contained therein (age, type of animal, and so on) and almost none leave the animal in the kennel when they are cleaning or tether it temporarily during cleaning. Thus, most responding shelters adhere to basic recommendations for cleaning standards. Six percent each disinfect once a week or less than once a week which is potentially not frequently enough to safeguard against the spread of disease.

Ninety-three percent of shelters store all food in enclosed bins as recommended. While 89% of shelters vary light and dark according to natural body rhythms, 33% never play classical music to calm animals (Table 4.7). Since relatively simple procedures can be used to reduce the stress of being in an unfamiliar environment more shelters should consider the importance of playing music or books on tape for their animals; classical music has been found to be more calming than heavy metal (Kogan, Schoenfeld-Tacher, & Simon, 2012) (<http://www.companionanimalpsychology.com/2016/01/how-audiobooks-can-help-shelter-dogs.html>).

### Table 4.6 Cleaning/Disinfecting

|                        | % Twice Daily | % Once Daily | % Every Other Day | % Once a Week | % Less Than Once a Week |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Enclosures cleaned     | 64            | 34           | 1                 | 0             | 0                       |
| Enclosures disinfected | 29            | 56           | 4                 | 6             | 6                       |

### Table 4.7 Other Animal Care Activities

|                              | % Frequently | % Rarely | % Never |
|------------------------------|--------------|----------|---------|
| Animals removed for cleaning | 94           | 5        | 0       |
| Animals tethered             | 4            | 31       | 65      |
| Classical music              | 46           | 21       | 33      |
| Light and dark varied        | 89           | 7        | 4       |

## Health and Emergency Protocols

Responding shelters were asked to identify the types of medical services they had in place to offer animals within the shelter (Table 4.8). Almost all of the shelters always document all medical care, assess the health of the animals at intake, and provide core vaccines and parasite prevention in accordance with best practice guidelines. Most also provide rabies vaccination, necessary grooming, use modified live viruses, and have emergency medical and disease response plans in place. The provision of basic vaccines and parasite prevention assures that the chances of disease transmission in the shelter will be minimized. Some animal medical issues such as rabies, parasites, and leptospirosis can also be transmitted to humans, thus vaccinations help protect the public health. Outbreaks of disease in shelters are common for a variety of reasons including the intake of stray animals, transfer programs from areas with high rates of diseases such as parvo, and the need to admit animals from hording situations where their health status can be compromised. DACC's emergency medical plan led to national recognition by leaders in shelter medicine for their handling of an emerging pneumovirus contagion in 2016.

Fig. 4.3 illustrates the activities and processes that are not as frequently employed. The use of analgesic pain management is

### Table 4.8 Medical Services

|                                    | % Always | % Often | % Sometimes | % Never |
|------------------------------------|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Ongoing training for medical staff | 16       | 19      | 27          | 37      |
| Document all care                  | 96       | 3       | 2           | 0       |
| Assess health on intake            | 91       | 6       | 3           | 0       |
| Core vaccines on intake            | 84       | 6       | 5           | 6       |
| Modified live vaccines             | 61       | 11      | 10          | 18      |
| Rabies vaccination                 | 79       | 8       | 2           | 21      |
| Emergency medical plan             | 71       | 16      | 6           | 6       |
| Pain management                    | 49       | 11      | 26          | 15      |
| Parasite prevention                | 82       | 8       | 6           | 2       |
| Grooming                           | 69       | 21      | 8           | 2       |
| Disease response plan              | 74       | 11      | 11          | 5       |
| Mark sterilized animals            | 19       | 8       | 16          | 57      |
| Necropsy for unexpected death      | 9        | 14      | 39          | 38      |

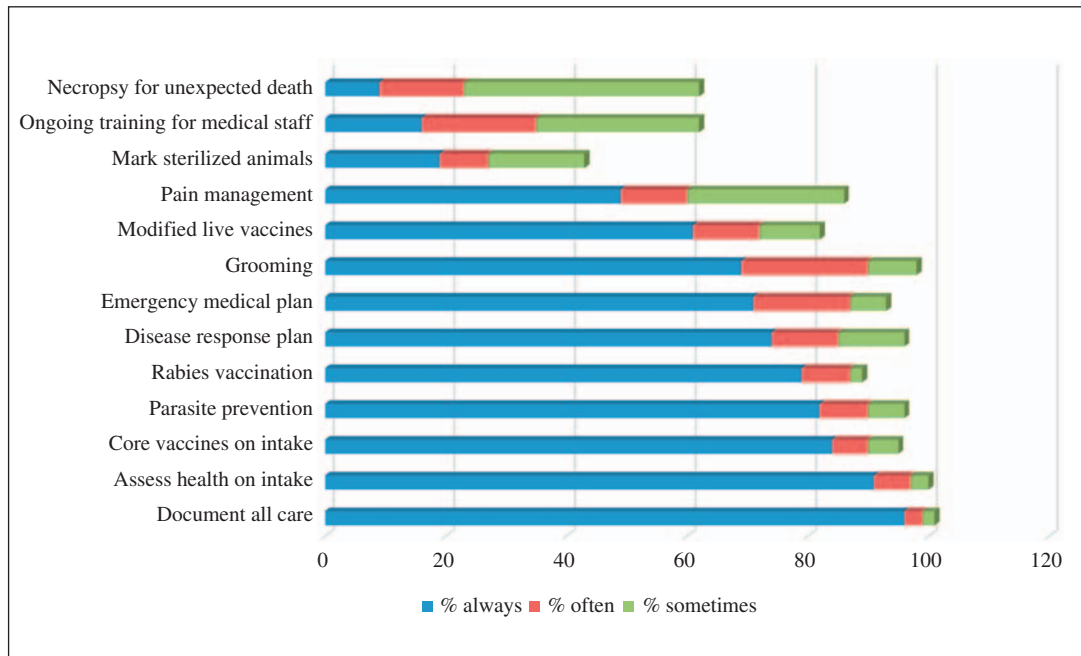


**Figure 4.3** Frequency of medical services and processes.

less common than might be expected given it is a fairly inexpensive and simple response to animal discomfort. Very few of the shelters provide ongoing medical training for medical staff, mark sterilized animals with tattoos or ear cropping, or perform necropsy for unexpected deaths. That these are less common activities raises concerns, particularly in the case of marking sterilized animals which is a cost-free procedure if done at the time of surgery. Pain management is critical for humane care but can also reduce kennel neuroses and other behavioral issues, and helps protect staff and volunteers from bites. Not marking spayed animals can result in unnecessary surgeries in the future if the animal ends up stray at another shelter or is kept by a finder. Necropsy can indicate potential diseases like canine influenza which can spread rapidly through the shelter population. While it would require additional veterinarian time or the need to send the body to a specialist which could be costly, unexpected deaths are hopefully sufficiently uncommon that the additional cost would be worthwhile in comparison to the expense of a disease outbreak.

## Volunteers

The use of volunteers can compensate for capacity constraints in the form of budget and staff. The types of activities actually performed by volunteers are thus of interest. Volunteers are most commonly used for cat comforting, fund raising, dog walking, community events, and for grooming or cleaning animals (Table 4.9). Volunteers are used for these activities at least to a moderate extent in over 60% of the shelters. Use of volunteers for shelter cleaning, to train other volunteers, to provide foster care, and for dog training is less common, although roughly half of the responding shelters use volunteers to at least a moderate extent for these purposes. There is at least moderate use of volunteers for clerical or administrative tasks (filing, data entry, and follow-up calls with adopters), to provide humane education, and for adoption counseling in over 30% of responding shelters. Volunteers are least likely to be used for euthanasia decision-making (which should be a staff or administrative

**Table 4.9 How Volunteers Are Used**

|                      | % Large Extent | % Moderate Extent | % Minimal Extent | % Do Not Use |
|----------------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Cat comforting       | 55             | 25                | 6                | 14           |
| Fund raising         | 45             | 29                | 12               | 14           |
| Dog walking          | 58             | 15                | 15               | 11           |
| Community events     | 51             | 21                | 15               | 13           |
| Grooming/cleaning    | 37             | 25                | 27               | 11           |
| Shelter cleaning     | 35             | 22                | 24               | 19           |
| Train volunteers     | 29             | 25                | 17               | 29           |
| Foster care          | 37             | 14                | 29               | 21           |
| Dog training         | 20             | 29                | 29               | 23           |
| Humane education     | 20             | 18                | 23               | 39           |
| Adoption counseling  | 18             | 18                | 15               | 49           |
| Admin/clerical       | 15             | 16                | 22               | 47           |
| Behavior testing     | 8              | 10                | 19               | 63           |
| Post-op monitoring   | 10             | 6                 | 16               | 69           |
| Adoption decisions   | 11             | 4                 | 18               | 67           |
| Behavior plans       | 7              | 6                 | 18               | 69           |
| Clinic staff         | 7              | 4                 | 23               | 66           |
| Euthanasia decisions | 6              | 0                 | 3                | 92           |

**Table 4.10 Most and Least Common Volunteer Activities**

| Most Used         |    | Not Used             |    |
|-------------------|----|----------------------|----|
| Activity          | %  | Activity             | %  |
| Dog walking       | 58 | Euthanasia decisions | 92 |
| Cat comforting    | 55 | Behavior plans       | 69 |
| Community events  | 51 | Post-op monitoring   | 69 |
| Fund raising      | 45 | Adoption decisions   | 67 |
| Foster care       | 37 | Clinic staff         | 66 |
| Grooming/cleaning | 37 | Behavior testing     | 63 |

decision), to provide staff assistance in clinics, and to develop animal behavior plans, or make adoption decisions.

Table 4.10 provides a summary of the volunteer data indicating the activities for which they are most and least used. Dog walking and cat comforting are common activities and, while foster care is one of the more common activities, it is only used by 37% of the shelters. Here it is clear that the more specialized activities involving behavioral issues, medical services, adoptions, and euthanasia are not areas where volunteers are commonly involved potentially because of the higher levels of training required for volunteers to perform such tasks. The Humane Society of Huron Valley (HSHV) appears to be one of the few responding shelters that have volunteer assignments in the clinic. Staffing activities such as filing, answering phones, making appointments, and so on are things that volunteers can easily do with minimal training. While the postoperative monitoring of animal patients requires training, the activity is primarily one of watching them so that staff can be alerted as they are coming out of anesthesia so they can be safely moved to kennels. Again, with proper training this is a relatively simple task for many volunteers. It would free up veterinary staff for other activities such as additional surgeries; volunteers are used for these clinic tasks at HSHV. (Although it is sometimes hard to find volunteers who enjoy postoperative monitoring since they have limited animal interaction as all their patients are asleep.)

Because of the widespread reliance on volunteers for a variety of tasks the training they are provided is important; in 80% of responding shelters all volunteers must attend a basic

Table 4.11 Training for Volunteers

|                     | % All Volunteers | % Most Volunteers | % No Volunteers |
|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Initial orientation | 80               | 12                | 8               |
| Apprentice time     | 34               | 30                | 36              |
| For specific tasks  | 42               | 43                | 15              |
| Training updates    | 35               | 41                | 24              |

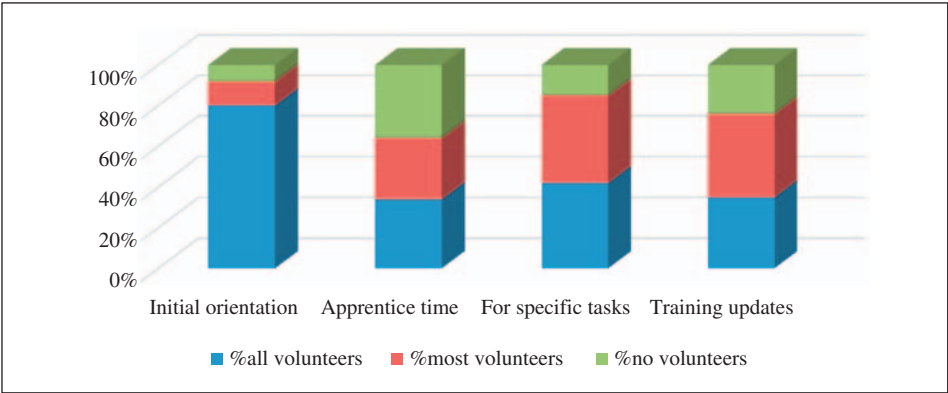


Figure 4.4 Volunteer training comparison.

orientation (Table 4.11 and Fig. 4.4). An additional 12% require training for most volunteers. Beyond that, more specialized training for specific tasks is provided to all or most volunteers in 85% of the shelters. Refresher training is also commonly provided. Due to length constraints on the survey, it was not possible to include more questions about the nature, quality, or detail of the training provided. Based on personal experiences as a volunteer in four of the shelters responding to the survey, it is clear that the extent and rigor of training varies considerably. In two of the shelters dog and cat volunteers receive separate specialized training including presentations by staff or more experienced volunteers and hands-on experiences. In these shelters dogs and cats are rated by ease of handling. A secondary training and a number of shelter service hours are necessary to progress to the next level of difficulty. In one of the other shelters, in the general orientation volunteers are shown where the leashes and dogs are and the walking trails are pointed out.

Volunteers are then free to walk dogs or comfort cats with no other training (dogs are rated and those that volunteers cannot walk are identified). Another shelter has a relatively new volunteer program with many volunteers drawn from several known rescue groups and shelters. These experienced volunteers engage in dog handling while others do laundry, dish washing, enrichment toys, and organization of supplies. Thus, all of these shelters provide training, but the nature of that training is quite different.

Fig. 4.4 shows trends in volunteer training more clearly. Apprentice time is the least common training offered to volunteers. While this would include minimum numbers of required hours to move up to higher level tasks, such programs also typically involve new volunteers working with more senior ones for a period of time. This ensures that knowledge presented at specialized training has been absorbed and can be applied. HSHV uses a version of apprentice time for their Head Start program where volunteers act as trainers for struggling dogs. New Head Start volunteers shadow more senior ones before they start dog training on their own. While not all volunteer activities require apprenticeships, shelters using volunteers for more skilled hands-on activities would do well to consider them, particularly since senior volunteers can serve as mentors, thus avoiding burdens on staff time.

Finally, there are several practices that can enhance the experience of volunteers and/or assist the shelter in managing the volunteer workforce. Although responding shelters are quite divided on these practices, the majority do not have a volunteer board to transmit volunteer ideas and concerns to shelter management, implement a disciplinary process in order to manage volunteer activity and behavior, conduct volunteer satisfaction surveys, or offer volunteer opportunities to minors (Table 4.12). Despite the lack of mechanisms for volunteer input, 56% of

**Table 4.12 Volunteer Experience**

|                      | % Yes | % No |
|----------------------|-------|------|
| Volunteer board      | 46    | 54   |
| Disciplinary process | 40    | 60   |
| Junior volunteers    | 43    | 58   |
| Satisfaction surveys | 31    | 69   |

shelter directors indicate that they have low volunteer turnover; 34% indicate moderate turnover; and only 10% say they have high turnover.

While shelter directors report low turnover, given the lack of mechanisms for volunteer input, it is possible that they are not in a position to assess volunteer satisfaction. Shelter volunteers are there because of a love of and commitment to animals. From experience, this reality can lead to volunteers continuing to work in shelters even under conditions of stress, conflict between personal values and shelter decisions, and sometimes even in the face of active hostility from shelter administration. Often this takes the form of stress and conflict over decisions to euthanize animals, particularly from volunteers who have worked closely with those affected. Volunteers often have longer tenures, more animal handling experience, and in some cases, professional training than shelter staff. Under these conditions volunteers can become advocates against the euthanasia of particular animals through a number of means including: education of staff on animal health and behaviors; using relationships with staff to lobby for particular animals; and resistance through reputational, legal, and public relations means (Guenther, 2017). Ideally shelters would respect the experience of volunteers and use their considerable commitment and skills to improve practice. Seeking volunteer input through surveys or through representation on shelter committees or boards can have a number of benefits. As noted earlier and in other research, because volunteers can be more experienced and knowledgeable than shelter staff they have important insights (Guenther, 2017). Since the volunteer experience differs from that of staff, volunteers may have new ways of looking at shelter practices that could be valuable. Finally, seeking volunteer input is vital to volunteer morale, shows that the shelter values them, and can help interpret or explain decisions.

## Animal Enrichment

Providing enrichment activities is critical for easing the stress of the shelter environment, increasing adoptability, preventing kennel neurosis, and building skills, particularly for dogs (Tuber et al., 1999). The most commonly provided enrichment activities for dogs include the use of an outdoor play yard, enrichment and chew toys, behavioral training, and individualized behavior plans (Table 4.13). Slightly less common enrichment activities include trips out of the shelter to the community such

**Table 4.13 Dog Enrichment**

|                           | % Offer Regularly | % Offer Occasionally | % Do Not Offer |
|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Individual behavior plans | 31                | 49                   | 19             |
| Outside play yard         | 82                | 9                    | 9              |
| Inside play yard          | 27                | 26                   | 47             |
| Agility equipment         | 23                | 15                   | 62             |
| Pack walks                | 18                | 26                   | 56             |
| Cohousing                 | 17                | 38                   | 46             |
| Play dates                | 26                | 32                   | 42             |
| Running program           | 8                 | 30                   | 62             |
| Read to calm              | 9                 | 23                   | 68             |
| Community trips           | 18                | 49                   | 33             |
| Foster care               | 29                | 41                   | 30             |
| Prison training           | 8                 | 21                   | 71             |
| Enrichment toys           | 65                | 27                   | 8              |
| Chew toys                 | 70                | 24                   | 6              |
| Behavioral training       | 37                | 52                   | 10             |

as overnight breaks, going to local parks, and foster care. Because research has suggested that the variety of dog exercise (including swimming and various types of outdoor play and the opportunity to interact with conspecifics) is important to quality of life while in the kennel, these types of activities are particularly vital (Kiddie and Collins, 2015; SAWA, 2017). Visits to the community can take a variety of forms and supports the needs of both the animals and humans. HSHV regularly has volunteers take dogs to library programs for children and to senior citizen facilities. Dogs also attend events such as farmers markets. These activities enhance visibility for the shelter, provide comfort to older adults, teach children about animals, and can lead to adoptions. For the dogs the opportunity to get out of the shelter and into a more “normal” environment can reduce stress, increase exercise, and assist in socialization. Several of the enrichment activities are rarely provided in the responding shelters: the use of prison training programs (such programs have been shown to have positive effects on dog behavior; Hennessy, Morris, & Linden, 2006), reading to calm the dogs, running programs, and an agility play yard.

Table 4.14 lists the dog enrichment activities that are most commonly available and those that are not. Use of an outside

**Table 4.14 Most and Least Frequently Offered Dog Enrichment Activities**

| Offered Regularly        |    | Not Offered      |    |
|--------------------------|----|------------------|----|
| Activity                 | %  | Activity         | %  |
| Outside play yard        | 82 | Prison training  | 71 |
| Chew toys                | 70 | Read to calm     | 68 |
| Enrichment toys          | 65 | Running program  | 62 |
| Behavioral training      | 37 | Agility training | 62 |
| Individual behavior plan | 31 | Pack walks       | 56 |
| Foster care              | 29 | Inside play area | 52 |

play yard and chew and enrichment toys are most common; the latter are inexpensive to provide and are often donated. Even the most modest shelters have spaces for outdoor exposure. Although modest in size, the old DACC shelter had several outside runs that allowed volunteers and staff to get dogs out of their small cages and enjoy some play time. Prison training programs are rare but have been experimented with by some shelters. HSHV at one time had such a program but found that because the dogs lived with and became very bonded to their trainers, they often had difficulty adjusting to their adoptive homes. The program was suspended. Agility training is uncommon, likely because it requires a large space and specific equipment. Inside play areas are more likely to be available in newer shelters that have space to allow dogs to play and include the proper flooring. Even though programs where volunteers read to dogs, or take dogs on group walks (pack hikes), and that allow trained volunteers to run with dogs are extremely low cost, these activities have not been implemented at most shelters. HSHV, for example, partnered with a collegiate girls track team to allow specially selected dogs to go running. Groups of volunteers take two hikes a week with senior volunteers managing the activity to minimize staff time (behavior staff select dogs for the hike). Other shelters like the HSLC have staff pack hikes on the weekend before the shelter opens. These hikes are important enrichment activities for the dogs but also provide bonding and team building opportunities for staff and volunteers.

Most of the shelters provide some type of behavioral training to dogs. When this is the case, positive reinforcement training is

**Table 4.15 Training Methods**

|                        | % Primarily | % Somewhat | % Not Used |
|------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| Positive reinforcement | 84          | 6          | 10         |
| Alpha-dog              | 3           | 14         | 83         |
| Clicker                | 18          | 28         | 55         |
| Shock                  | 0           | 0          | 100        |
| Positive punishment    | 5           | 17         | 78         |
| Lure-reward            | 30          | 26         | 44         |
| Compulsion-praise      | 25          | 25         | 50         |
| No training is offered | 9           | 18         | 73         |

used primarily in 84% of the shelters; this is consistent with best practice guidelines (Table 4.15). Clicker training is a form of positive reinforcement that is a bit less common than positive reinforcement in the form of treats or praise alone. In this method clicks initially accompany the treat; the clicks can ultimately be used alone, as a signal that the dog has performed the desired task. Lure-reward (also a form of positive reinforcement) training guides a dog into the desired behaviors (such as sitting) by using a treat as a guide.

Training using shock collars is not employed in any responding shelter and very few use positive punishment or alpha training. Positive punishment utilizes a stimulus to decrease the chances of a behavior happening. Such stimuli include pain, force, or physical correction such as yanking on a collar or squirting with water. The core of alpha dog training is reminding a dog of their place in the pack or of their subservience to humans. This often involves making the dog earn necessary items such as food by producing the desired behavior. Alpha training often recommends not getting on the same level as the dog (not lying with the dog on the floor) or separate sleeping places for dogs (not on the family bed). Training activities are not offered at all in only 27% of the shelters. Fig. 4.5 illustrates the prevalence of positive reinforcement (although without the element of clickers). Research is mixed on the use of clicker training in shelters with shelter staff reporting that it is too complicated for volunteers to implement and that continuation in the home is unlikely (Pryor, Parsons, Ganley, & Lyon, 2002). Reward-based training appears to work just as well and promotes positive interactions between humans and dogs (Wells, 2009).

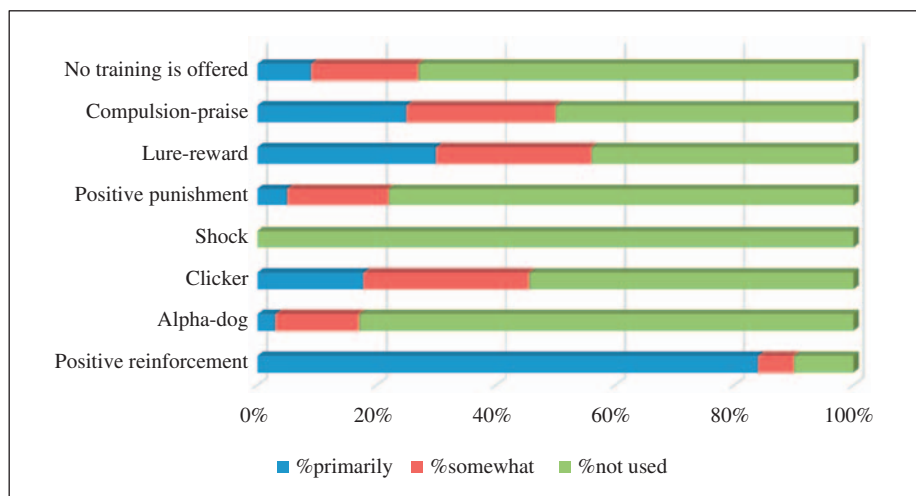


**Figure 4.5** Comparison of training methodologies.

**Table 4.16 Cat Enrichment**

|                    | % Offer Regularly | % Offer Occasionally | % Do Not Offer |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Cat comforting     | 86                | 12                   | 2              |
| Enrichment toys    | 88                | 9                    | 3              |
| Access to outdoors | 3                 | 14                   | 83             |
| Cohousing          | 48                | 40                   | 12             |
| Communal room      | 59                | 17                   | 25             |
| Places to hide     | 80                | 14                   | 6              |
| Scratching posts   | 75                | 19                   | 6              |

Generally shelter-based behavior training has been found to lead to lower return rates for dogs (Weiss et al., 2015).

Offerings for cat enrichment are more uniform across the shelters as has been suggested in prior work on cat shelters in Sweden (Eriksson, Loberg, & Andersson, 2009). Cat comforting (where staff or volunteers pet or play with the cats using toys), enrichment toys, scratching posts, and places to hide within their kennels are almost universally offered (Table 4.16 and Fig. 4.6). This uniformity is not surprising as the activities require fewer resources in terms of staff or volunteer time than the corresponding dog enrichment activities. Cohousing for

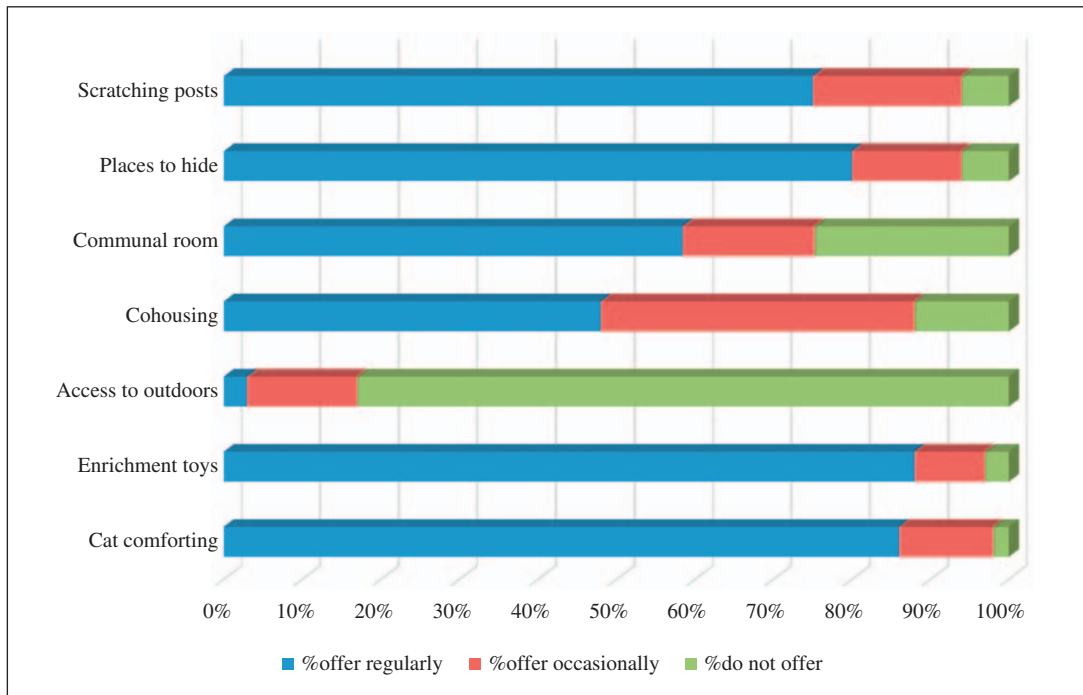


**Figure 4.6** Comparison of cat enrichment activities.

bonded cats is also common, as are communal rooms. The former generally entails just two cats in a larger kennel or enclosure together either because they have come from the same home or have bonded in foster care. Kittens from the same litter or of the same age are often housed together. Communal rooms on the other hand are typically larger spaces that can hold a number of cats that can roam freely in the room. Communal room cats are those that appear to be cat friendly based on behavior testing or observation with other cats. These rooms include perches, places to hide, and can be quite elaborate including tubes and items to climb on. Very few shelters offer controlled access to an outside space such as a screened-in porch as this is a feature older shelters are unlikely to have.

Fig. 4.6 illustrates the uniformity of cat enrichment activities. The less common activities, cohousing and access to outdoors via “cattios” require modification of facilities that may not be possible for many shelters. Cages or cat condos large enough for more than one cat may be costly; adding on a patio area is particularly expensive and likely is an option only in the most

**Table 4.17 Percentage Animals in Foster Care**

|               | 0% | 1%–10% | Over 10% |
|---------------|----|--------|----------|
| Dogs          | 33 | 48     | 19       |
| Cats          | 27 | 49     | 24       |
| Small mammals | 90 | 8      | 2        |
| Birds         | 94 | 4      | 2        |
| Reptiles      | 98 | 2      | 0        |
| Other         | 94 | 7      | 0        |

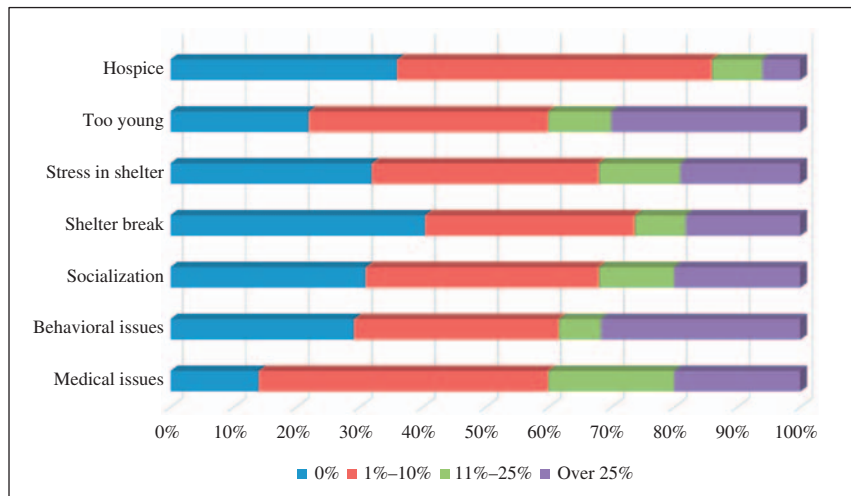
modern, purpose-built shelters or as the result of a major capital campaign.

Almost half of the responding shelters have less than 10% of their dogs and cats in foster homes (Table 4.17). Fostering rates for other types of animals are much lower. Given that many shelters sometimes or frequently reach capacity, it is somewhat surprising and concerning that more animals are not in foster since this implies other, less desirable solutions to overcrowding are being used. Only around 20% of the shelters have more than 10% of their animals in foster homes. Further, for fostering to be effective, that is, to ensure that animals reap the greatest benefits, shelters should carefully screen and train potential fosters. Although the survey did not explicitly ask about foster training, responding shelters did indicate whether they conducted home visits for prospective fosters to ensure that basic safety concerns were met (cleanliness, fenced yard, condition of owned pets, ability to separate fosters from own animals). Fifty-nine percent of responding shelters conduct home visits for potential foster providers. Thus, just over 40% do not, suggesting that greater due diligence may be needed to ensure that foster homes are suitable for the animals in need.

When foster homes are used for dogs, the most common reasons for fostering include behavioral or medical issues; fostering for socialization is also relatively common (Table 4.18). Puppies too young to be adopted or sterilized may also be placed in foster care. The comparisons in Fig. 4.7 illustrate the fact that only a small percentage of animals are in foster for any reason, however, and that fostering for stress in the shelter or shelter breaks is relatively rare. Foster homes are a valued and sometimes limited resource for many shelters, using them for short breaks from the shelter, even for overnights, provides

**Table 4.18 Reasons for Dogs in Foster Care**

|                   | 0% | 1%–10% | 11%–25% | Over 25% |
|-------------------|----|--------|---------|----------|
| Medical issues    | 14 | 46     | 20      | 20       |
| Behavioral issues | 35 | 39     | 8       | 38       |
| Socialization     | 31 | 37     | 12      | 20       |
| Shelter break     | 40 | 33     | 8       | 18       |
| Stress in shelter | 32 | 36     | 13      | 19       |
| Too young         | 22 | 38     | 10      | 30       |
| Hospice           | 36 | 50     | 8       | 6        |

**Figure 4.7** Comparison of reasons for dogs in foster.

a positive experience for the animals (more specifically dogs) and does not overtax individual foster hosts. Committing to taking a dog for several days may well seem more manageable to many potential fosters and can be of great benefit for dogs that are stressed or that have longer stays in shelters. There are a number of benefits of fostering: addressing capacity constraints in the shelter; socialization; providing opportunities to assess behaviors in the home; allowing an animal to recover from a medical issue; and, accommodating animals who do not thrive in a shelter environment. There are also significant benefits to the human foster including providing a transition in times of

pet loss, companionship particularly for those not in a position to care for an animal permanently (such as college students), exercise, and the satisfaction from helping an animal and its new family connect ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/23/foster-shelter-pet\\_n\\_6720804.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/23/foster-shelter-pet_n_6720804.html)).

The reasons for sending cats to foster are similar, although the rates of fostering for kittens too young for adoption are much higher than for puppies. Fig. 4.8 illustrates the frequency of fostering of kittens. Medical issues and socialization are also common reasons for sending cats to foster homes (Table 4.19).

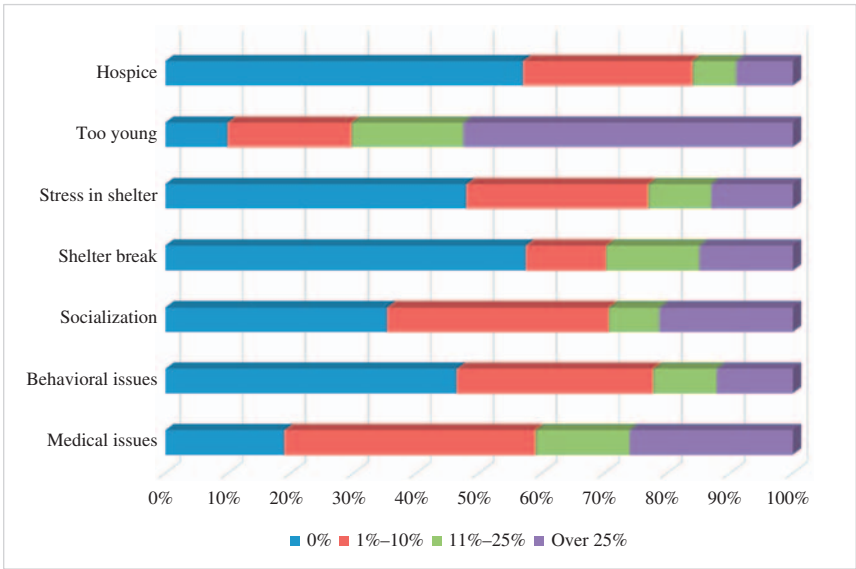


Figure 4.8 Comparison of reasons for cats in foster.

Table 4.19 Reasons for Cats in Foster Care

|                   | 0% | 1%–10% | 11%–25% | Over 25% |
|-------------------|----|--------|---------|----------|
| Medical issues    | 19 | 40     | 15      | 26       |
| Behavioral issues | 46 | 31     | 10      | 12       |
| Socialization     | 35 | 35     | 8       | 21       |
| Shelter break     | 58 | 13     | 15      | 15       |
| Stress in shelter | 48 | 29     | 10      | 13       |
| Too young         | 10 | 20     | 18      | 53       |
| Hospice           | 57 | 27     | 7       | 9        |

Many cats also suffer from stress in shelters but the use of short breaks is likely not as viable for cats as for dogs since cats tend to be less flexible about being moved around. The minimal use of fostering for behavioral issues may be an area of concern, however. Based on the site visits and interviews presented later, some shelters have only recently stopped euthanizing cats that had behavioral concerns such as not using the litter box. Through the use of foster homes shelters are able to assess the extent to which such behaviors can be modified or changed in a home setting. Other behavioral issues, such as not eating, pickiness in eating, or biting, can often be resolved in a foster home, where stress can be reduced. Challenging cats (those with “cat-titude”) can become more desirable as additional information about behaviors in a home setting can be provided to adopters.

### Adoption Practices

Almost all of the shelters do adoptions (97%); some municipal shelters are not set up to conduct adoptions and rely on transfers to other shelters and rescues. Social media is the most typical avenue to advertise the animals that are available for adoption; use of traditional media, making animals available through pet stores, and special events are also common (Table 4.20). Adopt-a-thons, such as the Bissell Empty the Shelters event, are more controversial and the majority of shelters use them only to a minimal extent or not at all (Fig. 4.9). There is concern that offering animals for free could encourage adopters that cannot afford future care, that people tend not to value as highly things that are free, and that the volume of adoptions at such events may preclude proper vetting of the adopters, leading to poor placements or a high rate of returns. Recent research has begun to indicate that many former barriers to adoption such as reference and vet checks and the

**Table 4.20 Ways to Increase Adoptions**

|                           | % High Extent | % Moderate Extent | % Minimal Extent | % Not at All |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Events, fairs, pet stores | 33            | 23                | 30               | 14           |
| Social media              | 89            | 9                 | 0                | 3            |
| Traditional media         | 44            | 15                | 29               | 13           |
| Adopt-a-thon              | 22            | 20                | 20               | 38           |

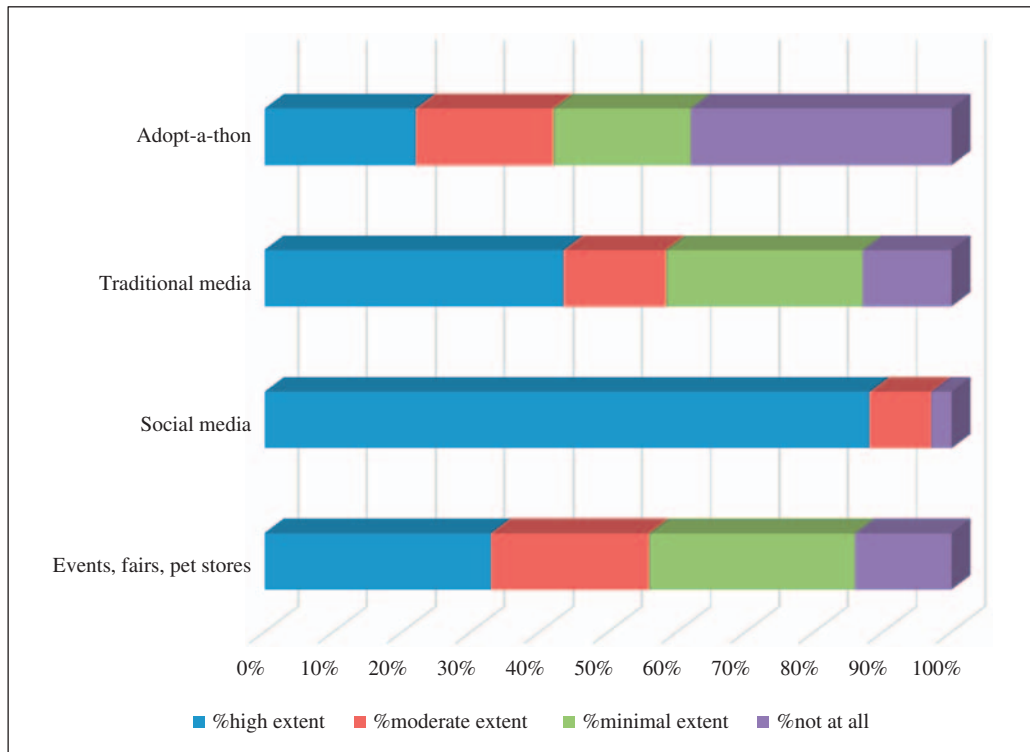


**Figure 4.9** Comparison of methods to increase adoptions.

eschewing of same-day adoptions are unnecessary and lead potential adopters to other sources such as Craig's List and puppy mills (<http://www.asPCA.org/search/node?search=streamlined%20adoptions>; <http://www.petfinder.com/pro/for-shelters/open-adoption-guidelines/>). Thus, streamlined (or open) adoption processes are recommended suggesting that concerns about special adoption events may be unwarranted. One strategy used in some shelters is to preapprove all adopters that want to get an animal at an adopt-a-thon. In this way, the usual care and counseling can be provided prior to the event.

Most shelters charge a flat fee for animal adoptions, regardless of the nature of the animal or adopter (Table 4.21). Sixty-four percent of the responding shelters offer discounts for senior animals to a moderate or high extent; almost half offer discounts for animals with health issues, although research has suggested that discounts for most medical issues are not necessary to ensure adoption (Reese, Skidmore, Dyar, & Rosebrook, 2017). Despite the widespread belief (and some academic

**Table 4.21 Adoption Fee Schedules**

|                              | % High Extent | % Moderate Extent | % Minimal Extent | % Not at All |
|------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Flat fee                     | 88            | 6                 | 1                | 4            |
| Ability to pay               | 3             | 9                 | 26               | 62           |
| Sales/special promotions     | 16            | 27                | 30               | 27           |
| Breed                        | 22            | 21                | 25               | 32           |
| Nature of adopter            | 15            | 22                | 24               | 39           |
| Length of stay               | 13            | 22                | 24               | 41           |
| Cost of medical invested     | 4             | 16                | 21               | 59           |
| Reduction for senior animals | 39            | 25                | 19               | 17           |
| Reduction for health issues  | 20            | 29                | 32               | 19           |
| Reduction for pit bull mixes | 6             | 11                | 28               | 55           |
| Reductions for black         | 0             | 8                 | 31               | 60           |
| Premiums for puppies         | 25            | 5                 | 2                | 69           |
| Premiums for kittens         | 22            | 10                | 2                | 66           |
| Premiums for pure bred       | 10            | 3                 | 4                | 83           |

research (Lepper, Kass, & Hart, 2002; Posage, Bartlett, & Thomas, 1998) that black animals require a longer time to be adopted, cost reductions are rarely offered based on color. Premiums for kittens, puppies, and pure-bred animals are also relatively uncommon despite research indicating that adopters are likely to be willing to pay higher costs (Reese et al., 2017), thus providing additional revenue that can be used to subsidize the care of other animals.

Forty-three percent of shelters offer sales or special promotions to at least a moderate extent. These can take a variety of forms such as buy-one-get-one-free kitten or cat sales, promotions of particular breeds or colors of animals, and foster animal adoption events. The concern is that such events are often done on an emergency basis, that is, when the shelter realizes that it has a large number of black cats or pit bull mixes for example. Research has indicated that planned and structured fee schedules that build in discounts for particular animals are more efficient than reactive sales because they allow the shelter to better plan their revenue flows and move animals to adoption before a surplus of any particular type of harder to place animals develops (Reese et al., 2017).

There is relatively little variation in the types of services provided to the animals prior to adoption (Table 4.22). Only 1% of

**Table 4.22 Provided at Adoption**

|                         | % Always | % Often | % Sometimes | % Never |
|-------------------------|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Spay/neuter             | 79       | 16      | 4           | 1       |
| Paired adoption         | 17       | 27      | 51          | 4       |
| Microchipped            | 59       | 10      | 9           | 23      |
| Dewormed                | 88       | 6       | 4           | 1       |
| Basic vaccinations      | 90       | 4       | 4           | 1       |
| Health check            | 84       | 6       | 9           | 1       |
| Behavioral assessment   | 80       | 9       | 9           | 3       |
| Dog—cat interaction     | 59       | 23      | 13          | 4       |
| Adoption trial period   | 40       | 16      | 27          | 18      |
| Adoption follow-up      | 51       | 21      | 16          | 11      |
| Full medical records    | 96       | 1       | 1           | 1       |
| Full behavioral records | 60       | 9       | 19          | 12      |

the shelters adopt nonsterilized animals, a much lower rate than the 32% among Ohio shelters (Lord et al., 2006). Deworming, basic vaccinations, health and behavior assessments, and the provision of complete medical and behavioral records are widespread. Shelters are split on microchipping with 59% always doing it and 23% never doing it. It appears that adopters are willing to pay more for animals with microchips so an increase in the percentage of shelters microchipping seems warranted (Reese et al., 2017).

A majority of the shelters offer opportunities for feral or undersocialized cats to be adopted into barns. Almost half of the shelters adopt out feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) positive cats and 46% feline leukemia virus (FeLV) cats. FIV has some similarities (but cannot be transmitted to humans) to human HIV. Cats with the disease can live many years and can only give it to another cat through saliva transmitted via deep bites or from an infected mother. Thus, it is relatively difficult to transmit. It is now widespread medical opinion that FIV cats can live with those that do not have the disease and hence some shelters (like HSHV) no longer test for it. FeLV is more serious because it changes the genetic characteristics of the cells and can reproduce within the cat. Lifespans for such cats are typically relatively short, although the progression of the disease is difficult to predict. These rates illustrate the changing nature of medical information about the lifespans and the

**Table 4.23 Specialized Cat Adoptions**

|                          |    |
|--------------------------|----|
| FIV adoptions            | 49 |
| FelV adoptions           | 46 |
| Barn/feral cat adoptions | 69 |

disease transmission likelihood of such cats (Table 4.23) ([http://www.petmd.com/blogs/fullyvetted/2010/april/adopting\\_FIV\\_Cats-7226](http://www.petmd.com/blogs/fullyvetted/2010/april/adopting_FIV_Cats-7226); [http://members.petfinder.com/~PA588/FIV\\_Information.htm](http://members.petfinder.com/~PA588/FIV_Information.htm); <http://www.vetstreet.com/our-pet-experts/why-this-vet-thinks-fiv-positive-cats-make-great-adoptees>).

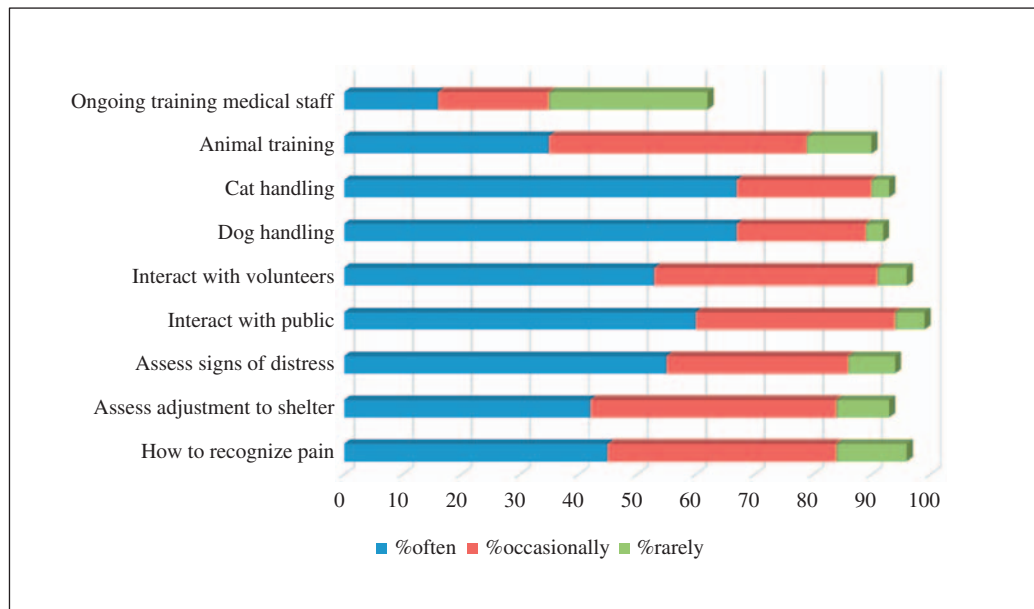
### Staffing and Training

Shelters responding to the survey are quite uniform in offering a wide variety of training opportunities to staff. Training is least likely to be provided for animal handling but is still provided by almost 80% of shelters (Table 4.24). Fig. 4.10 focuses on just those training activities that are offered either often or only occasionally. Here it is clear that staff are not often trained in how to address problematic behaviors of animals (typically dogs). Training on how to recognize pain and shelter adjustment problems is offered only occasionally in most shelters. This is concerning because of the importance of these issues to the quality of life for animals in the shelter and enhancement of their chances of adoption.

Of more concern is the low rate of grief and stress management support with the majority of shelters never offering such assistance to staff or volunteers (Table 4.25). Given the increasing concern related to compassion fatigue among animal care workers, particularly veterinary staff (Mitchner and Ogilvie, 2002; Rank, Zaparanick, & Gentry, 2009), this is problematic. While lack of support for compassion fatigue might not be reflected in outcome variables such as inspection reports or kill rates, it is critical to the human component of sheltering. Rates of ongoing training for medical staff are also quite low. While veterinary staff may well be getting medical information from professional journals and organizations, research has suggested that there is a need for the veterinary profession in general to be more aware of issues in shelter medicine (Stavisky, Brennan, Downes, & Dean, 2017) (Michigan has a licensing requirement

**Table 4.24 Staff Training**

|                                | % Often | % Occasionally | % Rarely | % Never |
|--------------------------------|---------|----------------|----------|---------|
| How to recognize pain          | 45      | 39             | 12       | 5       |
| Assess adjustment to shelter   | 42      | 42             | 9        | 8       |
| Assess signs of distress       | 55      | 31             | 8        | 6       |
| Interact with public           | 60      | 34             | 5        | 2       |
| Interact with volunteers       | 53      | 38             | 5        | 5       |
| Dog handling                   | 67      | 22             | 3        | 8       |
| Cat handling                   | 67      | 23             | 3        | 8       |
| Animal training                | 35      | 44             | 11       | 10      |
| Ongoing training medical staff | 16      | 19             | 27       | 37      |

**Figure 4.10** Staff training offered.

for vets that includes continuing education. However, no implementation procedures were created so it currently is not in force for license renewal. [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/lara/lara\\_vet\\_faqs\\_032015\\_485853\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/lara/lara_vet_faqs_032015_485853_7.pdf)). Thus, in-shelter training of medical personnel could address the nexus of medical and animal welfare and sheltering issues.

**Table 4.25 Grief/Stress Management Support**

|                          | % Often | % Occasionally | % Rarely | % Never |
|--------------------------|---------|----------------|----------|---------|
| For animal care staff    | 6       | 18             | 26       | 50      |
| For administrative staff | 6       | 20             | 23       | 51      |
| For veterinary staff     | 2       | 18             | 19       | 61      |
| For volunteers           | 5       | 17             | 20       | 59      |

**Table 4.26 Community Outreach Activities**

|                                   | % Frequently | % Sometimes | % Rarely | % Never |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|-------------|----------|---------|
| Booth/animals at community events | 43           | 36          | 18       | 3       |
| Adult humane education            | 31           | 49          | 19       | 1       |
| Child humane education            | 44           | 45          | 8        | 3       |
| Tours of shelter                  | 62           | 29          | 4        | 6       |
| Day of service                    | 41           | 30          | 15       | 14      |
| Camps                             | 10           | 11          | 22       | 58      |

## Community Relations

Community outreach activities are common among shelters in Michigan. Other than camps for children, over 70% of the shelters engage in all of the outreach activities recommended by best practices. Tours of the shelter and humane education for children are the most common activities (Table 4.26). The HSLC is active in having a presence at and taking animals to community events such as adoption days at pet stores, fairs, and festivals. Such activities aid in the adoption of the animals present, increase awareness of the shelter and its activities, and elicit donations. The HSHV used to have volunteers and dogs at such events but discontinued the practice several years ago telling volunteers that the donations elicited were not worth the expense to rent booth space or to organize volunteers to take dogs. This may well be shortsighted since the long-term benefits of a community presence (awareness, positive feelings about the organization because it is a visible part of the community, the potential for recruiting volunteers, increasing

awareness of adopting from a shelter) are likely to outweigh the immediate cost of being at an event. Both HSHV and HSLC conduct tours of their shelters for school and community groups. These include classes of children, girl and boy scouts and other clubs, and adult groups such as chambers of commerce. These too are important opportunities to increase community awareness and gain support of potential donors and adopters. For shelters like HSHV with a county contract to provide service, such tours are a critical opportunity to show community members what their tax dollars are paying for. Such activities are not possible for all shelters; DACC is not in a position to engage the public inside the shelter. This is the case for a variety of reasons including safety, the nature of the shelter facility, and the lack of staff and volunteer resources, for example. HSHV and HSLC work with community or business groups to conduct a “day of service” where members spend a day working on special projects (not including hands-on animal care) such as grounds keeping, maintenance, and cleaning projects. Finally, HSHV offers a number of camps and activities for children; day camp over the summer and during school breaks, movie nights for kids, birthday parties, and so on. These events are conducted by humane education staff and include visits with selected animals and education about animal care. While providing important humane education, these camps are also a way to inform parents about shelter activities and potentially lead to donations and volunteers.

Still, as shown in [Fig. 4.11](#), humane education for adults is less common. Because most dog bites occur when children are not properly supervised around animals and are perpetrated by dogs that are undersocialized and unsterilized, knowledge about proper animal care among adults is critical to protecting the health and welfare of their children and animals ([Vertalka, Reese, Wilkins, & Pizarro, 2018](#)). Training should also include how to interact with or react to strange or unknown dogs. This is particularly important in communities with significant numbers of stray and feral dogs such as Detroit and Flint. Roaming dogs are often a function of economic distress as owned animals are abandoned in homes or simply let loose on the streets and mate in the wild. Because of strong correlations between the locations of such dogs and rates of dog bites, educating the public on what to do when they are confronted with a roaming dog is critical ([Vertalka et al., 2018](#)). Adult education programs and materials could be prepared and offered by properly trained volunteers. A closer examination of the possibilities for increasing adult humane education programs seems warranted. Such

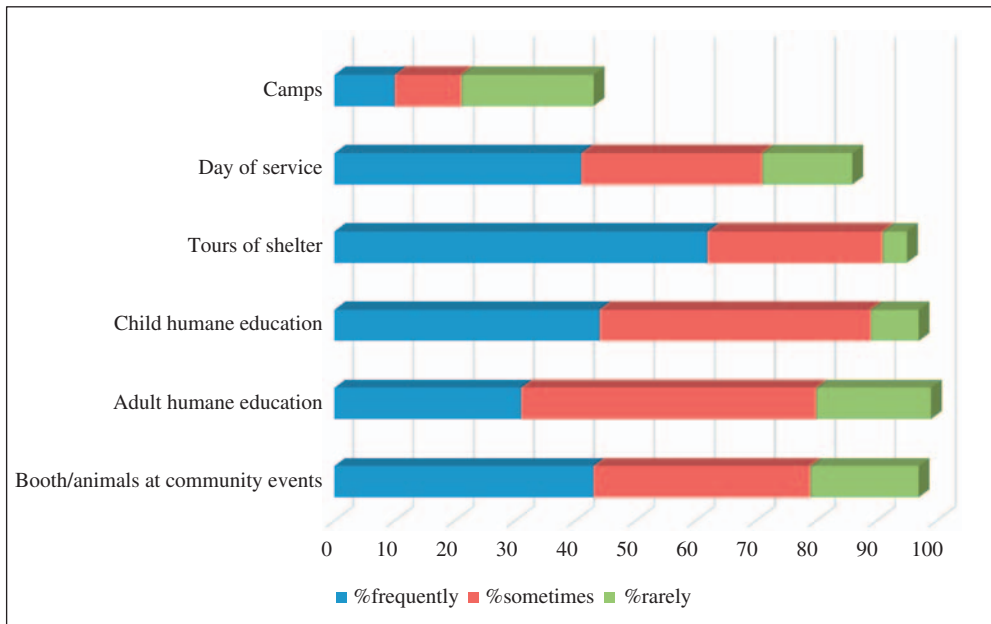


**Figure 4.11** Comparison of community outreach activities.

education could also reduce the numbers of animals entering the shelter and increase the number retained in their homes.

## Practice and Activity Dimensions

The survey asked a total of 80 questions, several with sub-questions, regarding the nature of the shelters and their activities. Many of the shelter traits such as age, capacity, staffing, and number of volunteers will be analyzed as single variables. However, questions related to the facility, use of volunteers, and staff training have conceptual commonalities and will be analyzed as factor scores. To facilitate further data analysis, data reduction in the form of confirmatory factor analysis was performed. This allowed the 37 shelter operation measures to be reduced to just nine variables, each of which contained two to eight related measures (Table 4.27). The findings present a useful portrait of the underlying conceptual types of shelters and activities. Results of the factor analysis by category are provided below. (To create the indexes, the variables were entered into a factor analysis and standardized scores were saved. For the factor analysis the standard SPSS defaults of varimax rotation and list-wise deletion of missing data were used.)

**Table 4.27 Dimensions of Shelter/Operation**

|                                                | Factor Loading |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b><i>Medical Use of Volunteers</i></b>        |                |
| Clinic staff functions                         | 0.91           |
| Post-op monitoring                             | 0.90           |
| Euthanasia decisions                           | 0.84           |
| <b><i>Soft Use of Volunteers</i></b>           |                |
| Shelter cleaning                               | 0.57           |
| Fund raising                                   | 0.73           |
| Community events                               | 0.82           |
| Clerical                                       | 0.56           |
| Humane education                               | 0.75           |
| Grooming/washing                               | 0.75           |
| Adoption counseling                            | 0.71           |
| Training of volunteers                         | 0.80           |
| <b><i>Hard Use of Volunteers</i></b>           |                |
| Foster care                                    | 0.64           |
| Cat comforting                                 | 0.82           |
| Dog walking                                    | 0.90           |
| Dog training                                   | 0.82           |
| <b><i>Use of Volunteers for High Skill</i></b> |                |
| Adoption decisions                             | 0.82           |
| Behavior testing                               | 0.90           |
| Behavior plans                                 | 0.92           |
| <b><i>Health/Stress Training Staff</i></b>     |                |
| Ongoing training for medical staff             | 0.41           |
| Recognize pain                                 | 0.95           |
| Assess shelter adjustment                      | 0.94           |
| Assess signs of stress                         | 0.96           |
| <b><i>Compassion Fatigue Support</i></b>       |                |
| For animal care staff                          | 0.96           |
| For administrative staff                       | 0.95           |
| For veterinary staff                           | 0.84           |
| For volunteers                                 | 0.94           |
| <b><i>People/Animal Training for Staff</i></b> |                |
| How to interact with public                    | 0.78           |
| How to interact with volunteers                | 0.85           |

(Continued)

**Table 4.27 (Continued)**

|                                      | Factor Loading |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Dog handling                         | 0.82           |
| Cat handling                         | 0.84           |
| Animal training                      | 0.83           |
| <b><i>Cleaning</i></b>               |                |
| Frequency of cleaning                | 0.87           |
| Frequency of disinfecting            | 0.87           |
| <b><i>Traits of Facility</i></b>     |                |
| Separate air circulation for ISO     | 0.68           |
| Minimization of sound                | 0.55           |
| Minimize dog sound in cat areas      | 0.80           |
| Minimize visual contact between dogs | 0.77           |

There are four conceptually different ways that the responding shelters use volunteers; to assist in medical clinics, to provide ancillary or “soft” services, to provide hands-on or “hard” services; and for medical activities and decisions requiring specialized skills. Soft use of volunteers typically involves assistance with fund raising, community events, cleaning (which is often laundry and dish washing as opposed to kennel cleaning), clerical functions, and training of other volunteers. Animal handling, including dog walking, cat comforting, and dog training are conceptually different than the soft uses. Training for shelter staff involves two conceptually different foci, one including how to recognize medical or stress issues in the animals and the other relating to how to interact with both people (the public and volunteers) and the animals (training and handling). Finally, there are two conceptually different aspects of shelter procedures and design. One involves how often animal areas are cleaned and deep cleaned or disinfected. The other includes design features which control sound and sight lines and ensure that air is not circulated from isolation areas to those where healthy animals are housed.

Animal welfare and outreach issues were more directly addressed by the remaining 32 questions, collapsed into nine conceptually different categories (Table 4.28). Shelters can provide a variety of services to the community and to their animal residents. There are two community service factors; activities

**Table 4.28 Dimensions of Shelter Activities**

|                                       | Factor Loading |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b><i>Community Presence</i></b>      |                |
| Presence at community events          | 0.74           |
| Public tours of shelter               | 0.67           |
| Day of service for groups             | 0.85           |
| <b><i>Humane Education</i></b>        |                |
| Provide for adults                    | 0.85           |
| Provide for children                  | 0.88           |
| Camps or events for kids              | 0.58           |
| <b><i>Cat Enrichment Basic</i></b>    |                |
| Cat comforting                        | 0.71           |
| Enrichment toys                       | 0.68           |
| Cohousing                             | 0.66           |
| Communal room                         | 0.73           |
| Places to hide                        | 0.71           |
| Scratching posts                      | 0.82           |
| <b><i>Cat Enrichment Enhanced</i></b> |                |
| Access to outdoor space               | 0.65           |
| TNR                                   | 0.79           |
| Community cat program                 | 0.74           |
| Adoptions for barn/feral              | 0.55           |
| <b><i>Cat Medical Adoptions</i></b>   |                |
| Adopt FIV cats                        | 0.92           |
| Adopt FeLV cats                       | 0.92           |
| <b><i>Dog Enrichment Basic</i></b>    |                |
| Outside play yard                     | 0.68           |
| Enrichment toys                       | 0.90           |
| Chew toys                             | 0.93           |
| <b><i>Dog Enrichment Enhanced</i></b> |                |
| Individualized behavior plans         | 0.73           |
| Inside play yard                      | 0.65           |
| Agility equipment                     | 0.72           |
| Pack walks                            | 0.75           |
| Running programs                      | 0.69           |
| Behavioral training                   | 0.81           |

(Continued)

**Table 4.28 (Continued)**

|                                       | Factor Loading |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b><i>Dog/Dog Enrichment</i></b>      |                |
| Cohousing                             | 0.89           |
| Play dates                            | 0.89           |
| <b><i>Dog Enrichment External</i></b> |                |
| Read to calm                          | 0.77           |
| Community trips                       | 0.90           |
| Foster care                           | 0.76           |

that take the shelters out into the community and those that bring the community in for humane education of both children and adults. Enrichment for the animals is important in increasing adoptions and in reducing stress and kennel neurosis that may lead to euthanasia. There are three separate cat and four separate dog enrichment factors. In each case there is a basic package of enrichment activities that are common across shelters and an enhanced set of enrichment activities that are more specialized. For example, basic cat enrichment includes toys, cat comforting by staff or volunteers, cohousing or communal rooms, and scratching posts. Community-based cat activities such as TNR, maintenance of cat colonies, and adoptions for feral cats into barns load on a separate factor. Providing adoptions for cats with FIV (more common) and FeLV (less common) load on another factor. Basic dog enrichment includes an outside play yard and toys. More enhanced or higher-level enrichment activities involve training programs, hikes or running programs, agility equipment, and individualized behavior plans to address issues that may make adoption more difficult. Finally, passive “read to calm” programs (often done by children or members of the community), foster care and trips to parks, overnights or other community events load on a separate factor representing efforts to get the dogs out of the shelter if only for a short break. The services which come with animals when adopted and the fees associated with them have been shown to be important in ensuring that animals are moved out of shelters as quickly as possible. Fee discounts and premiums are two separate dimensions of the fee schedule based on factor analysis (Table 4.29). Premiums are charged for young and pure bred animals while discounts are

**Table 4.29 Adoption Dimensions**

|                                          | Factor Loadings |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b><i>Adoption Fee Premiums</i></b>      |                 |
| Puppies                                  | 0.94            |
| Kittens                                  | 0.94            |
| Pure bred                                | 0.68            |
| <b><i>Adoption Fee Discounts</i></b>     |                 |
| Nature of animal                         | 0.66            |
| Length of stay                           | 0.77            |
| Senior animals                           | 0.80            |
| Health issues                            | 0.77            |
| Pit bull mixes                           | 0.74            |
| Black animals                            | 0.63            |
| Long stays                               | 0.85            |
| <b><i>Adoption Services Basic</i></b>    |                 |
| Sterilized                               | 0.79            |
| Paired adoption with bonded animal       | 0.38            |
| Dewormed                                 | 0.94            |
| Basic vaccinations                       | 0.93            |
| Health check                             | 0.91            |
| Behavioral assessment                    | 0.66            |
| Adopter gets full medical records        | 0.80            |
| Adopter gets full behavioral records     | 0.50            |
| <b><i>Adoption Services Enhanced</i></b> |                 |
| Microchipped                             | 0.71            |
| Dog—cat interaction                      | 0.72            |
| Adoption follow-up                       | 0.78            |

given for those that have been at the shelter longer, for older animals and those with medical issues, and for pit bull mixes which often spend longer periods in shelters due to public perceptions about their “breed” traits. There has been a good deal of research on whether there is an aversion to black animals; discounts for black animals load on the same factor with these other perceived adoption barriers. The types of services that come with or are internal to the animal also load on two conceptually different factors. Adoption basics include vaccinations, health and behavioral assessments, and sterilization. Several attributes load on a

separate factor and are considered to be “enhanced” due to their lower use among the responding shelters; microchipping, interaction with other dogs or cats in the home, and calls or visits to follow-up with the adopters.

This analysis shows that shelter activity is more than a host of disconnected parts. More importantly, these conceptual factors will be used in subsequent analyses identifying the categories of activities that are most strongly related to positive outcomes in terms of save rates, reductions in kill rates over time, success as perceived by shelter directors, and lower numbers of inspection violations. This simplifies the analyses but also provides information to shelter directors about packages of activities or processes that can form larger strategies to implement best practices and improve outcomes.

## Summary

As noted in Chapter 3, Methodology, there is wide variation among Michigan shelters in traits such as age of facility, size and capacity, resources, staffing, and volunteers. However, the forgoing analysis and discussion makes clear that many best practice recommendations are widespread even given this variation. The large majority of shelters exceed cleaning and sanitization guidelines, use proper methods of euthanasia when necessary, sterilize animals prior to leaving the shelter, provide proper medical care, engage in training of volunteers, offer a number of enrichment activities to both cats and dogs, engage in community outreach, have nonporous floors, and collect the full range of animal documentation. Since, as will be discussed more fully later, these last two items are the most commonly cited in state inspections of shelters, the high levels of compliance are likely related to awareness that these issues will be noticed by state officials.

Yet, there are some areas of concern that need to be considered and addressed by shelter directors and staff. These issues are identified below:

- While shelters tend not to operate beyond capacity and few euthanize to create space, other recommended solutions to address capacity issues are not as commonly employed. Most critically, foster care and transfers among shelters to reduce overcrowding and increase capacity could optimally be used to a greater extent.
- Trap, neuter, and return programs are not common. Given a good bit of research on the importance of TNR in

reducing feral cat populations, this is an area that needs to be addressed (<http://www.alleycat.org/resources/position-statement-on-trap-neuter-return/>, <https://bestfriends.org/resources/feral-cats-and-tnr/community-cat-programs-public-policy-and-legal-considerations>).

- Shelters provide the bulk of the medical services recommended, but the use of analgesic pain management is not as widespread as it should be, there is little ongoing training for shelter medical staff, and spayed/neutered animals are not uniformly marked with ear cropping or tattoos. Pain medication and marking sterilized animals are not costly and could (and should be) done by any shelter.
- Training for staff is good in most areas with the important exceptions of medical training for veterinary staff, animal handling, and how to recognize and address compassion fatigue. This raises concerns about the health and safety of both staff and the animals and should be addressed.
- Although volunteers appear to have adequate training opportunities, the quality of that training may vary. Little is done to solicit volunteer input; doing so can be important to volunteer morale and, in cases of high staff turnover, volunteers may have longer institutional memories and greater skills than many new staff (Guenther, 2017). Volunteers constitute an important resource for areas of shelter improvement and ideas about ways to address any problematic issues. They are also often significant financial donors.
- While enrichment is widespread, cat enrichment tends to be more extensive and uniform than dog enrichment. This is likely the case because toys, tools, and time required for cat enrichment are more modest. In particular, shelters need to consider how to increase the opportunities for dogs to have breaks, either through day trips to the community, overnight and foster breaks, running programs, hikes and other means of getting them out of the stress of the shelter, and giving them an opportunity to act like dogs.
- Adoption best practice recommendations are being met with the exception of the fee structure in many shelters. Flat fees are widespread and do not address important variations in the nature of the animals such as age, breed, size, and other characteristics which may require discounts or might allow for premiums.

Finally, the factor analysis indicates that there are clear conceptually distinct categories of processes and activities. Thus, individual activities are not simply disconnected parts but are combined in systematic ways to form general patterns of

practice. This is important to understand when thinking about best practice guidelines and how shelters implement them on the ground but is also vital in terms of research and analytical approach both in terms of future studies and in the analyses to follow.

## Check List for Recommended Best Practices

This check list focuses on those best practice recommendations that are less commonly being met in Michigan shelters based on the forgoing analysis. The list also emphasizes practices that are of relatively lower cost and hence could be implemented in most shelters.

- ✓ Shelter infrastructure:
  - If sight lines between dogs cannot be eliminated for all kennels, adjust the assignment of dogs to kennels so that those that benefit from the stimulation (and those that are not reactive) are in kennels with the greatest sight lines.
  - Minimize dog sound in cat areas through the use of music or bird sounds. Explore the possibility of moving cats to a different area of the shelter.
  - Consider placing stressed or reactive dogs in offices for kennel breaks.
  - Experiment with the use of visual barriers such as washable panels.
- ✓ Data management:
  - Keep records of any behavioral incidents.
  - Ensure that all bites are reported and tracked.
  - Ensure that all injuries are reported and tracked.
- ✓ Population management:
  - Create and expand foster programs.
  - Create transfer partnerships with other shelters and rescues.
  - When under capacity consider assisting other shelters by receiving their animals on transfer.
  - When over capacity transfer animals out.
  - Always require sterilization prior to adoption.
  - Consider TNR and community cat programs.
- ✓ Animal care:
  - Play classical music or books on tape or reduce stress.
- ✓ Health and emergency protocols:
  - Recognize the indicators that an animal is in pain and administer analgesics.

- Ensure that medical staff are getting ongoing training (this could be provided externally).
- Mark sterilized animals.
- Isolate incoming animals particularly if receiving young dogs from high parvo areas. Since it can take up to 12 days from initial exposure to the onset of parvo, isolation periods for incoming puppies should err on the side of caution.
- ✓ **Volunteers:**
  - Increase use of volunteers for foster care and other hands-on animal care.
  - Volunteer training should be progressive and include apprentice time.
  - Implement avenues for volunteer input including satisfaction surveys.
  - Consider creating a junior volunteer program.
  - Respect and use the experience (both in the shelter and in professional arenas) of volunteers.
- ✓ **Animal enrichment:**
  - Increase the use of foster care.
  - Conduct home visits for potential foster homes.
  - Particularly consider fostering for animals experiencing stress or that have behavioral issues.
  - Implement short-term shelter breaks for dogs.
  - Consider active physical programs for dogs such as running and hiking.
  - Institute reading programs which can be done by adults or children.
  - Explore the possibilities of play groups for dogs.
  - Provide cohousing for cats.
- ✓ **Adoption practices:**
  - Proactively base pricing systems on the traits of the animal.
  - Charge premiums on animals in higher demand such as puppies, kittens, and pure-bred animals.
  - Price reductions for animals with medical issues are typically not necessary.
  - Follow-up with adopters about their experiences.
  - Reduce red tape and barriers to adoption.
  - Microchip all animals.
  - Consider adoptions for FIV and FeLV cats.
- ✓ **Staffing and training:**
  - Increase training on animal handling.
  - Increase training on how to recognize pain and shelter adjustment issues.
  - Provide training or workshops on compassion fatigue.

- Ensure that medical staff are pursuing opportunities for ongoing training.
- ✓ Community relations:
  - Be present at community events.
  - Explore opportunities to provide humane education to adults.

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## RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SHELTER TRAITS AND ACTIVITIES

As noted previously, the term “animal shelter” encompasses a wide variety of facilities. What shelters can, and actually do, engage in depends on attributes such as their legal status (public or private), catchment area, whether they provide open or limited admissions. Capacity of the facility, staffing levels, and budgets are also important. There is probably no single criterion that can capture all of the significant differences among shelters. To begin an initial discussion of the relationships between the traits of shelters and their activities, the responding shelters have been grouped into county animal shelters and all others. This is a useful illustration because, as will be shown later in the chapter, being a county shelter is related to a number of other processes and practices.

County shelters are a relatively homogenous group—they are all open intake accepting animals from a specific geographic area, have similar missions, and are publicly funded government agencies. Size of these shelters varies considerably, however. A total of 25 county shelters responded to the survey. The residual category is much more diverse, including municipal facilities, private nonprofit entities, and rescues. Most are limited intake, accepting only specific types of animals (dogs, cats, rabbits, or ferrets, for example) or specific breeds (boxers or greyhounds). Some have contracts with counties or municipalities to provide animal control services in a specific geographic area. Others are active in areas where there is a county shelter; these shelters may provide a package of services that is complementary to those of the public facility.

Table 5.1 provides summary characteristics of these two categories of shelters. The county shelters are older and operate out of older facilities. The county shelters on average, are able to accommodate more dogs and cats. The average budget for these facilities is more than twice that of the other category but

**Table 5.1 Traits of County Versus All Other Shelters**

| Average         | County Agencies | All Others |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------|
| Age             | 47 years        | 19 years   |
| Age of Facility | 29 years        | 10 years   |
| Total Capacity  | 106 animals     | 80 animals |
| Dogs            | 48              | 31         |
| Cats            | 58              | 49         |
| Budget          | \$657,000       | \$275,000  |
| Employees       | 11.4            | 9.5        |
| Volunteers      | 71              | 80         |
| Kill rate 2014  | 33.8%           | 13.2%      |
| Kill rate 2015  | 29.4%           | 9.6%       |
| Number          | 25              | 48         |

the county facilities have just a couple more employees. Shelters in the other category have more volunteers, which may partially offset their smaller number of paid employees. While the analyses to follow will examine the relationships among various aspects of shelters and their activities in more detail, the simple comparison between county shelters and all others illustrates some of the most visible differences among shelters based on a critical attribute of structural organization.

The analyses at the end of [Chapter 4](#), Activities and Practices, indicated that the processes and activities in animal shelters are more than just a collection of disparate parts. As a result, it is important to understand the relationships among activities and processes, if only to assess whether the same shelters are engaging in all the best practices in a “rich get richer” dynamic. And, clearly the potential correlations between shelter traits such as size, resources, age, and whether it is a county facility, and the activities conducted are vital to understanding what is possible given a particular set of resources and also what characteristics might reasonably be modified to lead to more intensive use of best practice recommendations.

In some cases, traits of shelters are determinative of activities. For example, financial resources are necessary to hire staff, purchase supplies, and provide medical care. The physical facility constrains capacity, sets the parameters for the amount of outdoor space available for play yards or walking, and defines what is possible as far as noise control and sight lines. Yet, many aspects of shelters are malleable such as the number of

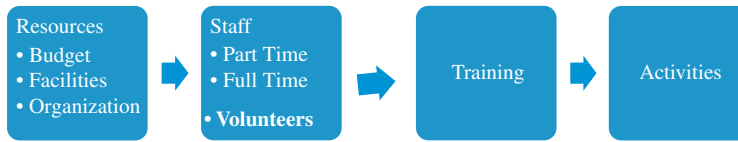
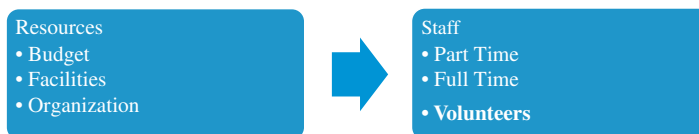


**Figure 5.1** Hypothetical model.

volunteers and how they are deployed, how animals are labeled and promoted, whether transfers in or out are done, and adoption policies and pricing. Decisions on these issues are not fully constrained by either resources or whether the shelter is in a rural or urban area, for example. How shelters balance their constraints and opportunities is critical to success as will be illustrated more clearly in [Chapter 6](#), Which Shelter Activities Are Associated With Positive Outcomes? Following here is a discussion of relationships between shelter traits and activities and among activities. The discussion is organized by the model presented in [Fig. 5.1](#). It is reasonable to assume that the resources of shelters, in the forms of budget and nature of the facility, impact the numbers of staff and volunteers that are needed and can be supported. Staff and volunteers are then trained to perform particular activities. The relationship between these activities and outcomes, such as save rates, is explored in the following chapter.

## Shelter Resources and Staffing

A critical question about shelters is the potential for the “rich to get richer,” i.e., whether the same shelters have greater resources across the board. [Table 5.2](#) examines the relationships in the first two boxes of [Fig. 5.1](#), shelter resources and staffing (including volunteers), to determine the extent to which resources are additive.



Shelters and rescues that have longer tenures clearly have a resource advantage; older organizations have more staff and

## Table 5.2 Correlations: Resources and Staff

|               | Age  | Age Facility | # Full time | # Part time | # Admin | # Animal Care | # Medical | Budget | City   | County | Open   | Limited | No Contract | Contract | # Volunteers | UR <sup>a</sup> | Capacity <sup>b</sup> |
|---------------|------|--------------|-------------|-------------|---------|---------------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|-------------|----------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Age           | 1.00 | 0.17         | 0.51**      | 0.28*       | 0.50**  | 0.40**        | 0.43**    | 0.56** | 0.18   | 0.20   | 0.05   | 0.08    | −0.16       | 0.16     | 0.43**       | 0.24            | 0.56**                |
| Age facility  |      | 1.00         | −0.06       | −0.11       | −0.09   | −0.16         | −0.05     | −0.16  | 0.00   | 0.07   | 0.06   | −0.01   | −0.02       | −0.14    | −0.13        | 0.54            | −0.18                 |
| # Full time   |      |              | 1.00        | 0.41**      | 0.61**  | 0.82**        | 0.93**    | 0.97** | 0.30*  | 0.14   | 0.15   | −0.05   | −0.15       | 0.19     | 0.71**       | 0.28            | 0.61**                |
| # Part time   |      |              |             | 1.00        | 0.64**  | 0.45**        | 0.35*     | 0.24   | −0.06  | −0.21  | −0.10  | 0.17    | 0.09        | 0.18     | 0.44**       | 0.39            | 0.56**                |
| # Admin       |      |              |             |             | 1.00    | 0.70**        | 0.54**    | 0.64** | 0.12   | 0.03   | 0.13   | 0.12    | −0.03       | 0.33*    | 0.55**       | 0.52            | 0.69**                |
| # Animal care |      |              |             |             |         | 1.00          | 0.84**    | 0.87** | 0.31*  | 0.01   | 0.14   | −0.01   | 0.02        | 0.27     | 0.72**       | 0.64            | 0.66**                |
| # Med         |      |              |             |             |         |               | 1.00      | 0.96** | 0.38** | 0.11   | 0.16   | 0.01    | −0.08       | 0.23     | 0.78**       | 0.05*           | 0.61**                |
| Budget        |      |              |             |             |         |               |           | 1.00   | 0.36*  | 0.20   | 0.19   | −0.04   | −0.15       | 0.31*    | 0.77**       | 0.24            | 0.65**                |
| City          |      |              |             |             |         |               |           |        | 1.00   | 0.06   | 0.17   | −0.14   | −0.27*      | 0.15     | 0.17         | 0.20            | 0.09                  |
| County        |      |              |             |             |         |               |           |        |        | 1.00   | 0.36** | −0.46** | −0.54**     | 0.01     | 0.03         | 0.00**          | 0.26                  |
| Open          |      |              |             |             |         |               |           |        |        |        | 1.00   | −0.44** | −0.29*      | 0.24*    | 0.00         | 0.11            | 0.28                  |
| Limited       |      |              |             |             |         |               |           |        |        |        |        | 1.00    | 0.40**      | −0.06    | 0.15         | 0.09            | −0.02                 |
| No contract   |      |              |             |             |         |               |           |        |        |        |        |         | 1.00        | −0.39**  | −0.06        | 0.01**          | −0.24                 |
| Contract      |      |              |             |             |         |               |           |        |        |        |        |         |             | 1.00     | 0.15         | 0.07            | 0.31*                 |
| # Volunteers  |      |              |             |             |         |               |           |        |        |        |        |         |             |          | 1.00         | 0.62            | 0.73**                |
| Urban/rural   |      |              |             |             |         |               |           |        |        |        |        |         |             |          |              | 1.00            | 0.18                  |
| Capacity      |      |              |             |             |         |               |           |        |        |        |        |         |             |          |              |                 | 1.00                  |

\*Significant at 0.05, \*\*Significant at 0.01.

<sup>a</sup>Significant value for  $\chi^2$ , urban/rural is coded as a nominal variable.

<sup>b</sup>Total animal capacity including dogs, cats, and others.

volunteers and a larger budget. Facility age is only related to whether the organization has a city contract to provide services; city shelters tend to have older facilities. Not surprisingly higher budgets allow for more staff and for more volunteers. Thus, it appears that shelters with fewer staff resources do not compensate with more volunteers. This suggests that a robust volunteer program benefits from having staff to organize it. County shelters clearly exceed all others in their numbers of full-time staff while they tend to have fewer part-time staff (Fig. 5.2). Administrative and animal care staffing levels are almost identical between the two types of shelters.

Whether a shelter is serving a rural or urban area is not significantly correlated with resources in terms of budget, overall staff, or volunteers; rural shelters have fewer medical staff but otherwise do not appear to be at a disadvantage. Shelters that serve a county-wide area are significantly more likely to be open intake in that they must admit all animals originating from that county (and hence are significantly less likely to be limited intake or to not have a county contract). Rural shelters are more likely to serve a county-wide area. City shelters have significantly more staff and higher budgets. Budget then, appears unrelated to the nature of the shelter or rescue with the exception of the correlation just noted for city shelters. Thus, it is not the case here that having a county contract increases budgets.

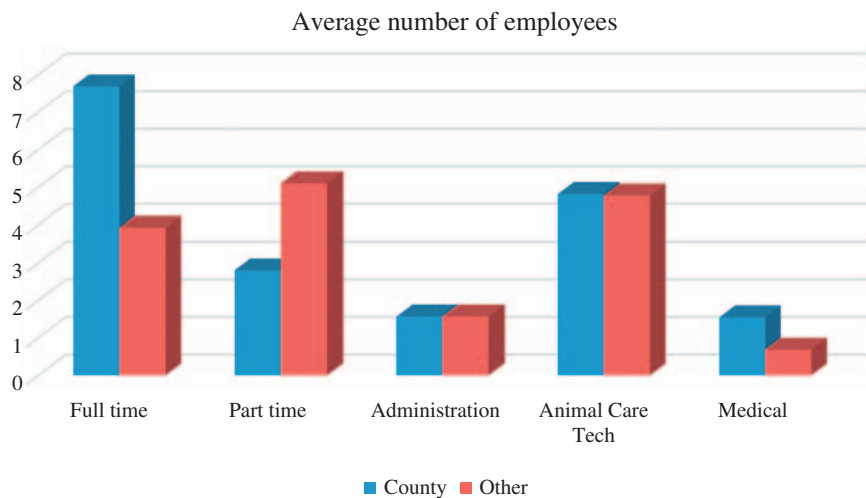


**Figure 5.2** County versus all other staffing.

Without that potential benefit, it appears that in Michigan, the county contract is only a single-edged sword that places greater burdens on shelters in terms of open intake, without providing necessary revenue. Hence, activity levels in terms of animal enrichment are reduced. To cover this, shelters like the Humane Society of Huron Valley (HSHV) with a county contract must also engage in significant fund raising, and seek donor, and grant revenue to be able to provide a wide range of services not covered by the limited county contract. Indeed, the contract between HSHV and its local and county governments has been a point of considerable controversy over the past 6 years as county finances became more stressed in 2011. Because Michigan law defining what animal control services are actually mandated at the municipal level is unclear this has played out in debate over what basic level of service the county is required to provide and hence contract and pay for to HSHV. Some county officials defined the mandate as dog licensing only, suggesting that minimal service would consist of the county sheriffs' department shooting stray dogs (<http://lucyannlance.com/controversy-over-humane-society-funding-washtenaw-county-will-bid-out-animal-control-services-if-hshv-isnt-able-to-sustain-funding-decrease/>). Suggestions that the HSHV contract be reduced by half and/or that bids would be taken from other area shelters to provide the minimal level of service were met with consternation by HSHV and the community at large. HSHV data and the results of a task force analysis indicated that \$951,793 worth of services were being provided while the county was paying only \$250,000 annually ([www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/index.ssf/2014/07/ann\\_arbor\\_agrees\\_to\\_135k\\_contr.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/index.ssf/2014/07/ann_arbor_agrees_to_135k_contr.html)). Single-year contracts were enacted for several years with a more stable funding stream approved in 2017. The point of this story is that considerable time and effort was required on the part of HSHV administration and high levels of community controversy took place before a longer term arrangement was concluded highlighting the considerable nonmonetary costs of nonprofit entities taking on a municipal contract. The year-to-year contracts and threats to halve the budget and bid out the contract disrupted long-term planning and HSHV has considered reverting to complete nonprofit status as a result.

The difference between sources of revenue between county shelters and those of all other types illustrates some of the variation that appears to define the nature of the county shelters. Fig. 5.3 shows that county shelters have a distinct revenue profile with much lower percentages coming from donations, adoption fees, fund raising, and merchandise sales. This may

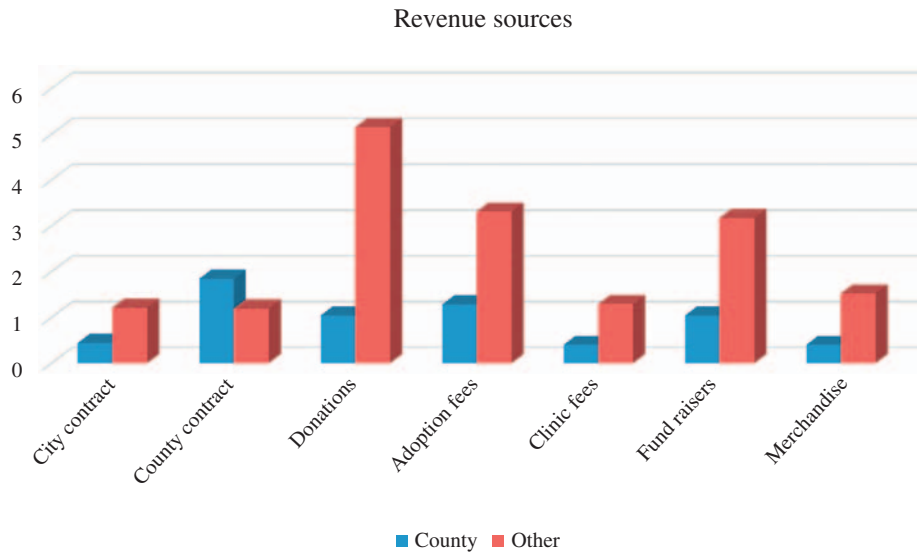


**Figure 5.3** Revenue sources for county and all other shelters.

suggest that because county shelters can rely on public tax dollars for their support, they miss out on ways to enhance their resources through donations and other self-funding mechanisms. Conversely, shelters not supported by public funding must use a variety of means to raise the revenue needed to fund their operations.

Open intake shelters which must accommodate all animals in the service area do not have more staff or resources. Shelter capacity is positively correlated with staff, volunteers, and budget although the direction of causation is likely to run from capacity to the need for more staffing. Age of the facility is not correlated with capacity. Shelters with a municipal contract are likely to have significantly more capacity for animals of all types; there is no correlation between urban or rural shelters and capacity.

In summary, there is a tendency for resources to be additive in that larger budgets allow for greater staffing and volunteers. However, the nature of the shelter is largely unrelated to budget and overall staffing levels, although county shelters have more full-time staff. The next critical question is whether these organizational and resource issues have any relationship to the activities performed at shelters. It would be logical to expect that greater resources and staff allow shelters to engage in higher levels of activities such as animal enrichment, medical

services to animals, and services to clients once animals are adopted. The analysis in the following section explores these putative relationships to ascertain if shelters that have more actually do more.

### Resources, Staffing, Training, and Activities

There are a number of significant correlations between the nature of the responding shelter and the activities reported, although not as many as perhaps might be expected, particularly in regards to the effects of budget. The activities represent the factors that were identified at the end of [Chapter 4](#), Activities and Practices. [Table 5.3](#) reiterates these factors and also indicates the label used for each factor in the correlations ([Table 5.4](#)).

Older organizations are more likely to use volunteers for hands-on animal activity and are significantly less likely to restrict their use to soft activities such as fund raising. Older facilities are significantly less likely to be able to limit sound and sight lines between dogs and between dog and cat areas. Shelters built more recently are more likely to have been able to respond to best practice guidelines for separation.

Table 5.3 Variable Labels

| Label     | Definition                           | Label   | Definition                           |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|---------|--------------------------------------|
| Incom     | Presence in community                | Feeredu | Fee reductions for particular traits |
| Human     | Humane education                     | Astand  | Standard adoption package            |
| Vmed      | Medical use of volunteers            | Aenhan  | Enhanced adoption package            |
| Volsoft   | Soft skill use of volunteers         | Thealth | Train on health, adjustment, pain    |
| Volhard   | Hands-on use of volunteers           | Tskills | Train on animal and people handling  |
| Vskill    | Highly skilled use of volunteers     | Fclean  | Nature of cleaning                   |
| Doggold   | Enhanced dog enrichment              | Sep     | Separation of species, air handling  |
| Dogbasic  | Basic dog enrichment                 | Order   | Order for cleaning                   |
| Dogsout   | Dogs get breaks from shelter         |         |                                      |
| Catbasic  | Basic cat enrichment                 |         |                                      |
| Catsout   | Enhanced cat enrichment              |         |                                      |
| Cathealth | Adoptions cats with medical issues   |         |                                      |
| Legacy    | Premiums for pure-bred/young animals |         |                                      |

## Table 5.4 Correlations Traits and Activities<sup>a</sup>

|           | Age    | Agefc  | # Full<br>time | # Part<br>time | # Admin | # Animal<br>Care | #Medical | Board  | Budget | City  | County | Open   | Limited | No<br>Contract | Contract | #<br>Volunteers | Capacity |
|-----------|--------|--------|----------------|----------------|---------|------------------|----------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|---------|----------------|----------|-----------------|----------|
| Incomm    | -0.22  | 0.03   | -0.13          | -0.19          | -0.21   | -0.28*           | -0.23    | 0.42** | -0.22  | 0.12  | 0.14   | -0.03  | -0.22   | -0.10          | -0.17    | -0.21           | -0.34*   |
| Humane    | -0.05  | 0.03   | -0.22          | -0.28*         | -0.31*  | -0.25            | -0.22    | 0.02   | -0.15  | -0.08 | 0.07   | -0.08  | 0.04    | 0.09           | -0.23    | -0.29*          | -0.35*   |
| Vmedical  | 0.23   | -0.02  | 0.04           | 0.07           | 0.05    | 0.07             | -0.03    | -0.21  | 0.10   | 0.14  | 0.26*  | 0.10   | -0.03   | -0.40*         | 0.16     | 0.03            | 0.19     |
| Vsoft     | 0.29*  | 0.07   | 0.06           | -0.03          | -0.17   | -0.12            | -0.05    | 0.11   | 0.04   | 0.07  | 0.39*  | 0.04   | -0.19   | -0.45**        | -0.02    | -0.08           | 0.04     |
| vhard     | -0.26* | 0.08   | -0.12          | -0.04          | -0.33*  | -0.28            | -0.15    | 0.27*  | -0.17  | -0.06 | 0.05   | -0.22  | -0.16   | 0.01           | -0.20    | -0.28*          | -0.29    |
| Vskill    | 0.29   | 0.05   | 0.12           | -0.07          | -0.04   | -0.12            | 0.15     | -0.24* | 0.19   | 0.13  | 0.24*  | 0.13   | -0.05   | -0.31**        | 0.20     | 0.07            | 0.07     |
| Doggold   | -0.05  | 0.17   | -0.27*         | -0.35**        | -0.34*  | -0.40**          | -0.31*   | 0.02   | -0.28  | 0.02  | 0.27*  | 0.20   | -0.40** | -0.31*         | 0.06     | -0.34**         | -0.23    |
| Dogbasic  | -0.14  | -0.11  | -0.11          | -0.31*         | -0.25   | -0.22            | -0.17    | 0.09   | -0.11  | 0.14  | 0.16   | -0.05  | -0.25   | -0.27*         | 0.05     | -0.14           | -0.08    |
| Dogpairs  | -0.19  | -0.13  | -0.18          | -0.16          | -0.27   | -0.22            | -0.18    | 0.09   | -0.14  | 0.18  | 0.29*  | 0.10   | -0.18   | -0.39**        | 0.04     | -0.14           | -0.12    |
| Dogout    | -0.17  | 0.15   | -0.40**        | -0.46**        | -0.53** | -0.49**          | -0.39**  | 0.17   | -0.36* | 0.02  | 0.31*  | -0.07  | -0.35** | -0.35**        | -0.21    | -0.28*          | -0.44**  |
| Catbasic  | 0.00   | 0.15   | -0.04          | -0.16          | -0.21   | -0.21            | -0.11    | 0.15   | -0.03  | 0.10  | 0.35** | 0.16   | -0.27*  | -0.38**        | 0.01     | -0.19           | 0.06     |
| Catsout   | 0.06   | 0.06   | 0.12           | 0.01           | 0.05    | 0.06             | 0.04     | 0.09   | 0.08   | 0.05  | -0.01  | 0.10   | -0.25*  | -0.02          | -0.05    | 0.12            | 0.07     |
| Cathealth | -0.04  | 0.04   | -0.18          | -0.26*         | -0.34*  | -0.28            | -0.18    | -0.10  | -0.13  | -0.02 | 0.17   | 0.03   | -0.18   | -0.21          | -0.03    | -0.21           | -0.13    |
| Legacy    | -0.22  | 0.11   | -0.11          | -0.17          | -0.25   | -0.02            | -0.05    | 0.18   | -0.07  | 0.03  | 0.14   | 0.03   | -0.05   | -0.15          | -0.07    | -0.01           | -0.02    |
| Feeredu   | 0.03   | 0.11   | -0.14          | -0.13          | -0.26   | -0.14            | -0.10    | 0.17   | -0.15  | 0.02  | 0.13   | -0.27* | 0.11    | 0.07           | -0.33**  | -0.11           | -0.14    |
| Astand    | 0.05   | 0.08   | -0.10          | -0.20          | -0.23   | -0.21            | -0.09    | -0.10  | -0.07  | -0.10 | 0.43** | -0.03  | -0.27*  | -0.33**        | -0.11    | -0.16           | -0.22    |
| Aenhan    | -0.06  | 0.11   | -0.21          | -0.40**        | -0.38** | -0.38**          | -0.22    | 0.05   | -0.22  | -0.11 | 0.48** | 0.03   | -0.39** | -0.29*         | -0.21    | -0.29*          | -0.32*   |
| Thealth   | -0.16  | 0.07   | -0.18          | -0.23          | -0.25   | -0.20            | -0.26    | 0.08   | -0.15  | -0.12 | 0.05   | 0.12   | -0.10   | 0.05           | -0.11    | -0.25           | -0.03    |
| Tskills   | -0.24  | 0.01   | -0.08          | -0.11          | -0.08   | -0.03            | -0.13    | 0.19   | -0.05  | -0.07 | -0.01  | -0.02  | -0.03   | 0.04           | -0.07    | -0.14           | 0.06     |
| Fclean    | -0.13  | -0.11  | 0.10           | 0.15           | 0.16    | 0.17             | 0.11     | -0.05  | 0.08   | -0.01 | -0.10  | 0.08   | -0.17   | 0.08           | 0.04     | -0.02           | -0.01    |
| Sep       | 0.04   | 0.44** | -0.12          | -0.13          | -0.08   | -0.26            | -0.21    | 0.16   | -0.17  | -0.08 | 0.19   | 0.01   | -0.07   | -0.18          | -0.04    | -0.24           | -0.13    |
| Order     | -0.16  | -0.07  | -0.11          | -0.17          | -0.16   | -0.07            | -0.12    | 0.18   | -0.13  | 0.29* | -0.29* | -0.17  | 0.07    | 0.10           | -0.15    | -0.04           | -0.08    |
| #         | 2      | 1      | 2              | 6              | 6       | 4                | 2        | 3      | 1      | 1     | 10     | 1      | 6       | 10             | 1        | 5               | 4        |

Significant

\*Significant at 0.05, \*\*Significant at 0.01.

<sup>a</sup>All activity indexes are coded so that a lower score means more activity.

Greater full-time staffing allows for more enhanced dog enrichment and for programs that give dogs an opportunity to get out of the shelter for breaks; staffing levels do not appear to affect cat enrichment. Having more part-time staff is significantly correlated with a number of activities; increased humane education, enhanced dog enrichment and shelter breaks, a greater tendency to adopt cats with medical issues, and more services provided with adoptions. This finding is important because it suggests that shelters with limited resources could rely on part-time staff to allow for a more extensive array of activities to be conducted. Resources need not only cover full-time employees. However, it should be remembered that exclusive use of part-time employees can also create challenges such as frequent turnover and less skilled and trained staff. The HSHV and Humane Society of Livingston County (HSLC) have different staffing approaches, with the former operating primarily with full-time staff and the latter with part-time staff, particularly in kennel and animal care roles. In these cases, the use of full-time staff at HSHV leads to more stability in staffing and an older and more mature animal care staff. Because of the part time, lower wage approach at the HSLC, jobs there compete with other part-time opportunities for young workers such as food service and retail. If a shelter must rely on part-time employees the hours should be reliable and the pay sufficient enough to reduce turnover so that workers can gain the experience necessary to provide high-quality animal care services.

Having more administrative staff is significantly correlated with the same activities as part-time staff with the addition of more extensive use of volunteers for hands-on animal activities; more volunteers are significantly related to the same set of activities. Having more animal care staff specifically leads to more activities in the community, enhanced dog enrichment and shelter breaks, and enhanced adoption services. More medical staff is related only to dog enrichment and shelter breaks. Surprisingly, budget is only correlated with one activity; higher budgets are related to more opportunities for dogs to have shelter breaks. Thus, staffing and volunteers are more critical to shelter activities than budget, although higher budgets allow for greater people resources as is demonstrated in the discussion of the interrelationships among resource indicators to follow. This suggests that how budgets are spent is, not surprisingly, more important than the simple fact of a larger budget. And, part-time staff and volunteers can be used to engage in a wide variety of critical activities, acknowledging the caveats discussed regarding part-time staff. It should also be noted that sufficient

administrative staff are needed to both supervise the part-time employees and run a strong and effective volunteer program.

Organizational traits are also related to a number of the activity indexes. The presence of a board of directors appears to increase activities within the community and the use of volunteers for hand-on activities. Since part of the purpose of a Board is to represent the shelter in the community and assist with fund raising this is a logical relationship. Having a board of directors significantly reduces the use of volunteers in high skill activities involving medical services and decisions, perhaps due to a greater awareness of liability issues. County-wide shelters tend to be more limited in their activities with significantly less use of volunteers for medical and soft activities, less dog enrichment, less basic cat enrichment, and fewer adoption services. Fig. 5.4 emphasizes the relationships between selected activities and county versus all other shelters. County shelters engage in lower levels of all activities in the figure with the disparities greatest for adoption services provided and the “soft” use of volunteers for activities such as fund raising, special events, and office tasks. The difference between levels of dog enrichment in county and all other shelters is greater than that for cat enrichment which is nearly identical.

Open intake shelters that must admit all animals from their service area are more likely to have higher fees for puppies and kittens and for pure-bred animals. Limited intake shelters that can pick and choose their animals are more likely to offer significantly enhanced dog enrichment, shelter breaks, cat enrichment, and both standard and enhanced adoption services. This clearly suggests that shelters that can control the types and

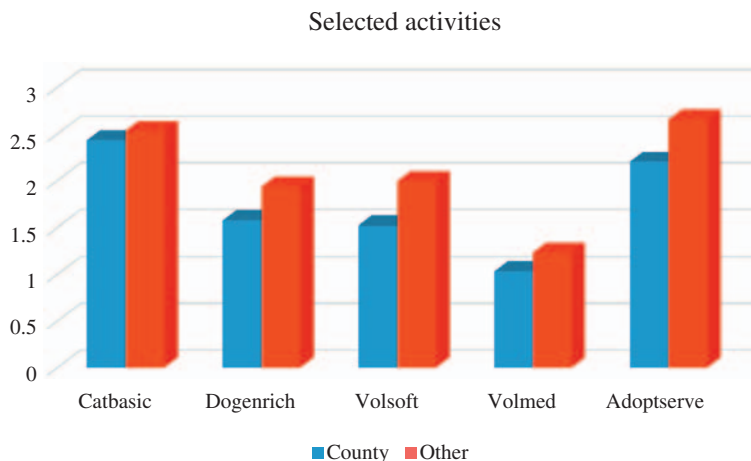


**Figure 5.4** County/noncounty comparison of selected activities.

number of animals they admit can provide more enhanced services. Similarly, shelters without a municipal contract are significantly more likely to engage in a wide variety of activities. A county contract again appears to be a double-edged sword; it may increase the amount of revenue available but, because it typically means that all animals from the county must be admitted, it constrains the services that can be provided, a finding that confirms previous research (Notaro, 2004). Shelters with a greater capacity are more likely to be involved in community activities, provide more adoption services, and are more likely to get dogs out of the shelter for breaks or into foster homes. Shelters can expand their capacity significantly through a vibrant foster care program; total capacity and the percent of dogs, cats, and other animals in foster care are significantly and positively correlated (at 0.45\*\*, 0.65\*\*, and 0.48\*\*, respectively).

Because volunteers are an important correlate of many of the shelter activities, it is useful to understand how shelters interact with them. Shelters that have a volunteer board for input to shelter staff and management also have codified volunteer disciplinary processes and regularly survey their volunteers (Table 5.5). Having more volunteers seems to lead to adoption of formal disciplinary processes. More volunteer hours annually are related to having a volunteer board, having more volunteers, and conducting volunteer surveys. Turnover in volunteers is not significantly correlated with any of the other volunteer practices, however. Since volunteer turnover is a common problem in shelters and rescues it is somewhat distressing to find no correlations between allowing for volunteer input via a volunteer

Table 5.5 Correlations Among Volunteer Practices

|                    | Volunteer Board | Discipline Process | # Volunteers | Hours  | Turnover | Survey  |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------|--------|----------|---------|
| Volunteer board    | 1.00            | 0.41**             | 0.05         | −0.34* | 0.00     | 0.40*   |
| Discipline process |                 | 1.00               | −0.26*       | 0.09   | 0.11     | 0.49**  |
| # Volunteers       |                 |                    | 1.00         | 0.44** | −0.04    | −0.44** |
| Hours              |                 |                    |              | 1.00   | 0.13     | −0.32*  |
| Turnover           |                 |                    |              |        | 1.00     | 0.08    |
| Survey             |                 |                    |              |        |          | 1.00    |

\*Significant at 0.05, \*\*Significant at 0.01.

board and surveys and turnover. Obviously, there are other correlates of the volunteer experience that were not included on the survey. Based on hands-on volunteer experiences, some of these factors could include: relations between staff and volunteers; relations among volunteers; nature of the volunteer coordinator; compassion fatigue or other types of burnout; concerns about shelter practices, particularly involving euthanasia; or the reality that the shelter volunteer experience was not as expected.

The extent of training provided to staff is not correlated with any of the shelter traits implying that decisions about training are not constrained by factors such as budget, capacity, staffing, or organization form. However, use of the training indexes masks some differences between county and all others shelters in the specifics of training provided to staff and volunteers as illustrated in Fig. 5.5. County-wide shelters provide less training in many respects: orientations and apprenticeships for new volunteers and volunteer training for specific tasks; documentation of volunteer training hours; and, updated medical training for staff. On the other hand, they are much more likely to document staff training and provide more frequent updated training to staff. They are slightly more likely to provide training updates to volunteers. Thus, generally, county shelters focus training

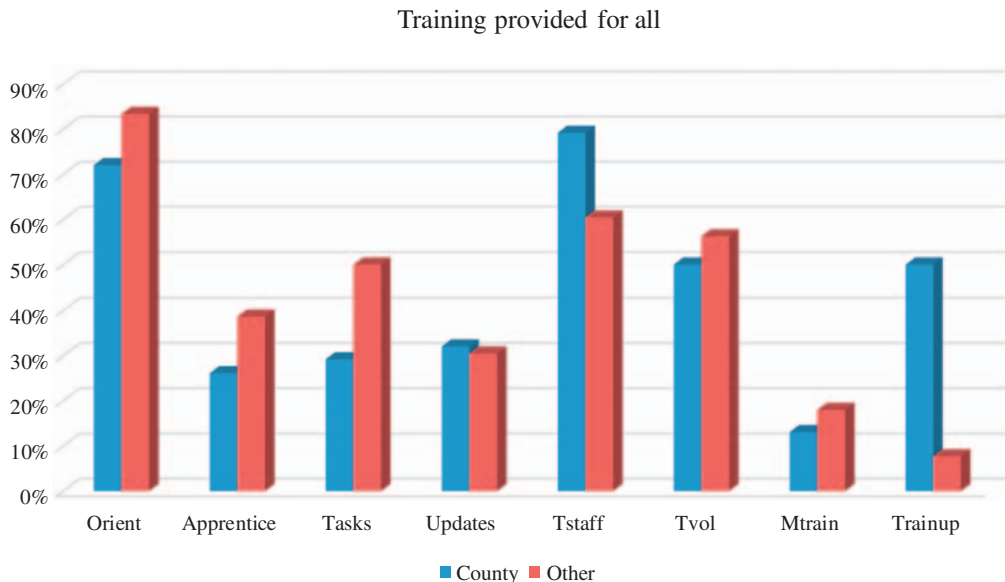


**Figure 5.5** County versus other shelters on training provided.

more on staff than volunteers while the opposite is true for other types of shelters.

Table 5.4 also includes the total number of significant relationships between each shelter trait (resources, staffing, and organization) and the activity indexes. Whether a shelter is a county facility or is a nonprofit without a county contact are each related to 10 of the activity indexes thus organizational form is important in the activities shelters perform. Having a limited access shelter is correlated with six activities. The numbers of administrative and part-time staff are each significantly related to six of the activity indexes with more staff allowing for greater activity; having more volunteers is related to five indexes. Budget, age of the facility, serving as a city shelter, being open access, and having a county contract are related only to a single index.

## Correlations Among Activities

The forgoing analyses have shown relationships between the resources and structure of shelters and between these traits and the activities shelters are able to perform. Some of the organizational attributes (being a county shelter and having more people resources for example) are very important. Budget and being a limited access shelter appear surprisingly unimportant in the activities conducted at shelters. Finally, it is useful to examine the relationships among the activity indexes to provide a sense of whether or not the same shelters are doing more of everything. There are a number of significant correlations among the activity factors with the general trend being that shelters that are higher on a particular factor are higher on other activities as well (Table 5.6). Again, it is important to remember that while many of the activity factors are correlated, the factor analysis indicated that there are conceptual differences among the factors. For example, all of the dog enrichment factors are correlated with each other and they are all correlated with basic cat enrichment. (The several cat activity factors tend not to be correlated). Many (but not all) of the volunteer use factors are correlated; use of volunteers for medical services is correlated with other soft volunteer activities as well as the skilled activities. Use of volunteers for soft activities and for hands-on animal care are also correlated. Shelters offering enhanced adoption services also have higher scores on many of the other activity indexes. The staff training factors are intercorrelated. Greater use of volunteers tends to be correlated with

## Table 5.6 Correlations Between Activity Factors<sup>a</sup>

|           | Incom  | Human  | Vmed    | Vsoft  | Vhard  | Vskill | Doggld | Dogba  | Dogpair | Dogsout | Catbasic | Catsout | Cathealth | Legacy | Feere  | Astand | Aenhance | Thealth | Tskills | Fclean  | Sep    | Order |
|-----------|--------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|----------|---------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|----------|---------|---------|---------|--------|-------|
| Incom     | 1.00   | 0.30*  | −0.09   | 0.34** | 0.52** | 0.12   | 0.41** | 0.48** | 0.24    | 0.44**  | 0.35**   | 0.16    | 0.19      | 0.20   | 0.25*  | 0.42** | 0.50**   | 0.16    | 0.24    | 0.19    | 0.36** | 0.13  |
| Human     | 0.30*  | 1.00   | 0.15    | 0.18   | 0.24   | 0.27*  | 0.18   | 0.20   | −0.04   | 0.28*   | 0.09     | 0.27*   | 0.11      | 0.08   | 0.39** | 0.18   | 0.40**   | 0.46**  | 0.20    | 0.04    | 0.28*  | 0.29* |
| Vmed      | −0.09  | 0.15   | 1.00    | 0.45** | 0.09   | 0.50** | 0.30*  | 0.21   | 0.35**  | 0.28*   | 0.11     | 0.11    | 0.04      | 0.09   | 0.21   | 0.18   | 0.13     | 0.25    | −0.03   | −0.35** | 0.07   | 0.05  |
| Volsoft   | 0.34** | 0.18   | 0.45**  | 1.00   | 0.46** | 0.59** | 0.41** | 0.28*  | 0.29*   | 0.35*   | 0.41**   | 0.01    | 0.37**    | 0.18   | 0.46** | 0.43** | 0.38**   | 0.15    | 0.04    | −0.16   | 0.25   | −0.18 |
| Volhard   | 0.52** | 0.24   | 0.09    | 0.46** | 1.00   | 0.16   | 0.47*  | 0.41** | 0.28*   | 0.42**  | 0.31*    | 0.11    | 0.12      | 0.25   | 0.55** | 0.35** | 0.44**   | 0.31*   | 0.35**  | 0.12    | 0.13   | 0.09  |
| Vskill    | 0.12   | 0.27*  | 0.50**  | 0.59** | 0.16   | 1.00   | 0.17   | 0.08   | 0.07    | 0.13    | 0.02     | 0.14    | 0.19      | −0.03  | 0.12   | 0.22   | 0.30*    | 0.02    | −0.10   | −0.17   | 0.09   | −0.19 |
| Doggold   | 0.41** | 0.18   | 0.30*   | 0.41** | 0.47   | 0.17   | 1.00   | 0.54** | 0.49**  | 0.42**  | 0.42**   | 0.14    | 0.27*     | 0.04   | 0.18   | 0.43** | 0.44**   | 0.44**  | 0.19    | 0.07    | 0.27*  | 0.05  |
| Dogbasic  | 0.48** | 0.20   | 0.21    | 0.28*  | 0.41   | 0.08   | 0.54** | 1.00   | 0.42**  | 0.44**  | 0.51**   | 0.05    | 0.14      | 0.24   | 0.10   | 0.34** | 0.54**   | 0.54**  | 0.21    | 0.26*   | 0.00   | 0.21  |
| Dogpairs  | 0.24   | −0.04  | 0.35**  | 0.29*  | 0.28*  | 0.97   | 0.49** | 0.42** | 1.00    | 0.44**  | 0.39**   | 0.12    | 0.16      | 0.08   | −0.09  | 0.29*  | 0.29*    | 0.28*   | 0.22    | 0.15    | −0.01  | 0.15  |
| Dogsout   | 0.44** | 0.28*  | 0.28*   | 0.35** | 0.42** | 0.13   | 0.42** | 0.44** | 0.44**  | 1.00    | 0.22     | 0.26    | 0.40**    | 0.16   | 0.19   | 0.41** | 0.51**   | 0.25    | 0.08    | 0.05    | 0.12   | 0.09  |
| Catbasic  | 0.35** | 0.09   | 0.11    | 0.41** | 0.31*  | 0.02   | 0.42** | 0.51** | 0.39**  | 0.22    | 1.00     | 0.00    | 0.27*     | 0.21   | 0.13   | 0.29*  | 0.39**   | 0.33*   | 0.27*   | 0.03    | 0.38** | −0.05 |
| Catsout   | 0.16   | 0.27*  | 0.11    | 0.01   | 0.11   | 0.14   | 0.14   | 0.05   | 0.12    | 0.26    | 0.00     | 1.00    | 0.08      | −0.27  | 0.09   | 0.06   | 0.22     | 0.27    | 0.18    | 0.09    | 0.31*  | 0.19  |
| Cathealth | 0.19   | 0.11   | 0.04    | 0.37** | 0.12   | 0.19   | 0.27*  | 0.14   | 0.16    | 0.40**  | 0.27*    | 0.08    | 1.00      | −0.05  | 0.00   | 0.21   | 0.15     | 0.21    | −0.03   | 0.02    | 0.17   | −0.03 |
| Legacy    | 0.20   | 0.08   | 0.09    | 0.18   | 0.25   | −0.03  | 0.04   | 0.24   | 0.08    | 0.16    | 0.21     | −0.27*  | −0.05     | 1.00   | 0.15   | 0.15   | 0.14     | 0.14    | 0.19    | −0.07   | −0.06  | 0.16  |
| Feeredu   | 0.25*  | 0.39** | 0.21    | 0.46** | 0.55** | 0.12   | 0.18   | 0.10   | −0.09   | 0.19    | 0.13     | 0.09    | 0.00      | 0.15   | 1.00   | 0.23   | 0.31*    | 0.15    | 0.15    | −0.18   | 0.09   | 0.12  |
| Astand    | 0.42** | 0.18   | 0.18    | 0.43** | 0.35** | 0.22   | 0.43** | 0.34** | 0.29*   | 0.41**  | 0.29*    | 0.06    | 0.21      | 0.15   | 0.23   | 1.00   | 0.55**   | 0.07    | 0.05    | 0.13    | 0.30*  | −0.19 |
| Aenhan    | 0.51** | 0.40** | 0.13    | 0.38** | 0.44** | 0.30*  | 0.44** | 0.54** | 0.29*   | 0.51**  | 0.38**   | 0.22    | 0.15      | 0.14   | 0.31*  | 0.55** | 1.00     | 0.42**  | 0.11    | 0.11    | 0.22   | 0.09  |
| Thealth   | 0.16   | 0.46*  | 0.25    | 0.15   | 0.31*  | 0.02   | 0.44** | 0.54** | 0.28*   | 0.25    | 0.33*    | 0.27    | 0.21      | 0.14   | 0.15   | 0.07   | 0.42**   | 1.00    | 0.66**  | 0.20    | 0.14   | 0.27* |
| Tskills   | 0.24   | 0.20   | −0.03   | 0.04   | 0.35** | −0.10  | 0.19   | 0.21   | 0.22    | 0.08    | 0.27*    | 0.18    | −0.03     | 0.19   | 0.15   | 0.05   | 0.11     | 0.66**  | 1.00    | 0.17    | 0.12   | 0.19  |
| Fclean    | 0.19   | 0.04   | −0.35** | −0.16  | 0.12   | −0.17  | 0.07   | 0.26*  | 0.15    | 0.05    | 0.03     | 0.09    | 0.02      | −0.07  | −0.18  | 0.13   | 0.11     | 0.20    | 0.17    | 1.00    | −0.14  | 0.01  |
| Sep       | 0.36** | 0.28*  | 0.07    | 0.25   | 0.13   | 0.09   | 0.27*  | 0.00   | −0.01   | 0.12    | 0.38**   | 0.31*   | 0.17      | −0.06  | 0.09   | 0.30*  | 0.22     | 0.14    | 0.12    | −0.14   | 1.00   | 0.00  |
| Order     | 0.13   | 0.29*  | 0.05    | −0.18  | 0.09   | −0.19  | 0.05   | 0.21   | 0.15    | 0.09    | −0.05    | 0.19    | −0.03     | 0.16   | 0.12   | −0.19  | 0.09     | 0.27*   | 0.19    | 0.01    | 0.00   | 1.00  |

\*Significant at 0.05, \*\*Significant at 0.01.

<sup>a</sup>All activity indexes are coded so that a lower score indicates more activity.

almost all of the animal enrichment activities. Shelter presence in the community is correlated with almost all of the uses of volunteers and dog enrichment activities. Only shelter cleaning and the ability to separate animals and air flow are not related to most of the other activities.

In short, while there are conceptual differences between the types of activities, the same shelters tend to provide a wider array of services, training opportunities, and animal enrichment. The fact that some shelters appear to do more of many activities is important only if doing more is significantly related to higher save rates. If only very specific activities, policies, and processes correlate with save rates then doing more of everything is not as important as doing the things that really matter. Particularly for shelters with fewer monetary and staff resources, really focusing these limited resources on activities that have a large impact is key and a goal that even the most modest shelters are likely to be able to achieve. The analyses in [Chapter 6](#), Which Shelter Activities Are Associated With Positive Outcomes?, will address this issue specifically.

## Summary

The statistical relationships among shelter traits and activities presented in this chapter lead to several conclusions. First, the same shelters tend to do more of all types of activities and services. However, before too much is made of this reality, the specific activities that are related to better outcomes, particularly in terms of save rates, need to be identified. It is possible that shelters can do fewer activities and still achieve good results if they are doing the “right” activities. This question is taken up in the next chapter.

While it is not surprising that higher budgets allow for more staff and volunteers, more money does not, in and of itself, lead to any activity with the exception that more shelter dogs appear to go on breaks into the community. More staff and volunteers, particularly administrative and part-time staff, do lead to the ability to do more activities and provide higher levels of service. Thus, it is not just how much money a shelter has, it is how it is used. Investments in particular kinds of staff and volunteers lead to greater activity, but again, the question of which activities are most important will be answered in [Chapter 6](#), Which Shelter Activities Are Associated With Positive Outcomes?

Because of the importance of volunteers, it should be noted that allowing them input into shelter activities and processes

via a volunteer board, providing a volunteer seat on an external oversight board, or through surveys are related to more volunteer hours. Shelters should consider ways to enhance the volunteer experience by listening to volunteer concerns and suggestions.

It is interesting to note that the presence of an external board of directors appears to increase the focus on activities that reach out into the community. Indeed, the purpose of a board of directors is to provide community input to the shelter and to assist in fund raising. That boards do appear to be related to more community activity suggests that they are functioning in the way they were designed and the creation of such a board should help shelters increase awareness and hopefully, donations and volunteers from the communities they serve.

Serving as the county shelter and being an open intake shelter tend to reduce the amount of activities a shelter can engage in. There is, however, little to nothing shelters can do about this organizational feature. Nonprofit shelters considering entering into a contract to provide animal control services for a county-wide area should give careful consideration to whether the contract will provide sufficient resources to offset the likely increase in animals and other responsibilities. For many shelters the calculus may not make sense.

Finally, the lack of correlation between resources and other shelter traits and activities is important and reinforced by the data given in [Table 5.7](#). Here the top 10 shelters in resources per dog and cat capacity are identified and several critical traits and activities shown. Numbers of staff and volunteers vary widely even across the best-funded shelters. Both urban and rural and open and limited intake shelters are represented. Age of organization and age of facility also vary although half of the shelters are in much newer buildings in comparison to the age of the organization. While most of the well-funded shelters are higher on the indexes of dog enrichment offered, hands-on use of volunteers, and training for staff, there are several shelters that have negative scores on these activity and training indexes. Finally, although outcomes are discussed in [Chapter 6](#), Which Shelter Activities Are Associated With Positive Outcomes?, the shelters also vary widely in their most recent kill rates from none to 67% (although kill rates have either stayed stable or decreased in most of the shelters) and in their inspection violations from none to seven over a 4-year period.

These data reinforce the conclusion that individual attributes such as budget, facility, staffing, and organizational nature of

**Table 5.7 Highest Resources Per Capita**

|                     | HSBV  | LTBHS   | HSWM    | HSLC    | SCHS    | DAS    | ICAS   | KCASE | CAHS    | UPAWS |
|---------------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|-------|---------|-------|
| Total staff         | 100   | 17      | 39      | 42      | 1       | 28     | 20     | 15    | 40      | 14    |
| Volunteers          | 700   | 30      | 200     | 35      | 25      | 115    | 125    | 25    | 600     | 100   |
| Urban/rural         | Urban | rural   | Urban   | Urban   | Rural   | Urban  | Urban  | Urban | Urban   | Rural |
| Basic dog enrich    | 0.67  | 0.67    | 0.67    | 0.67    | 0.67    | 0.67   | 0.15   | −3.15 | 0.67    | 0.67  |
| Enhanced dog enrich | 1.55  | 1.85    | 0.93    | 0.18    | −0.60   | 0.76   | −0.26  | −1.16 | 1.04    | 0.51  |
| Hard-use volunteers | 0.67  | 0.77    | 0.98    | −0.68   | 0.25    | 1.29   | 0.98   | −0.89 | 0.98    | −0.47 |
| Enhanced adoptions  | 1.04  | 1.04    | 0.53    | 1.04    | 0.53    | 1.04   | 0.42   | −1.33 | 1.04    | 1.04  |
| Training skills     | 0.36  | 0.89    | 0.63    | 0.63    | 0.63    | 0.63   | 0.63   | −1.11 | 0.89    | 0.04  |
| Training health     | 1.12  | 0.45    | 0.61    | 0.71    | 0.33    | 0.61   | 0.99   | −2.29 | 1.12    | 0.98  |
| Transport           | In    | In      | In      | In/out  | In/out  | In/out | In/out | No    | In      | In    |
| Age                 | 120   | 65      | 133     | 46      | 20      | 23     |        | 50    | 80      | 45    |
| Age facility        | 7     | 15      | 15      | 13      | 100     | 38     |        | 32    | 20      | 45    |
| Capacity            | 300   | 68      | 230     | 65      | 40      | 200    | 200    | 102   | 244     | 70    |
| Open/limited        | Open  | Limited | Limited | Limited | Limited | Open   | Open   | Open  | Limited | Open  |
| Perceived success   | Very  | Very    | Very    | Some    | Some    | Very   | Very   | Some  | Very    | Very  |
| Kill rate 2015.     | 8%    | 0%      | 24%     | 6%      | 0%      | 16%    | 27%    | 67%   | 12%     | 2%    |
| Change kill         | −0.07 | 0.00    | −0.23   | 0.00    | NA      | −0.05  | −0.12  | 0.14  | −0.19   | 0.00  |
| Violations          | 0     | 1       | 3       | 2       | 1       | 7      | NA     | 2     | 4       | NA    |

the shelter may well not be determinative of either activities or outcomes. High-resource shelters come in all types and have considerable variation in outcomes. In short, is it not all about the money. The following chapters will identify the most important activities in terms of outcomes and thus will suggest how, even small or poorly financed shelters, can still improve their outcomes and better the lives of the animals in their care.

## Findings Counter to Common Expectations

There are a number of results in this chapter that run counter to many common expectations about relationships among the resources, staffing, and activities of animal shelters. These are worth reemphasizing and they are presented in the check list below.

- ✓ Shelters located in rural areas appear not to be disadvantaged in terms of resources such as budget, staff, or volunteers.
- ✓ City shelters have higher budgets but funding is otherwise unrelated to the organizational characteristics or open or limited intake status of shelters.
- ✓ The number of full-time staff is unrelated to the number of activities conducted at shelters; part-time staff increase activity levels as do volunteers.
- ✓ Higher budgets are not related to the level of activities in and services provided by animal shelters.
- ✓ Age of the facility is not related to the level of activities and services provided.
- ✓ Being an open intake shelter does not limit the levels of activities and services provided.
- ✓ High resource shelters come in all organizational types and locations and have considerable variation in outcomes.

In the end, it is not all just about the money.

## Reference

- Notaro, S. (2004). Disposition of shelter companion animals from nonhuman animal control officers, citizen finders, and relinquished by caregivers. *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 7(3), 181–188.

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## WHICH SHELTER ACTIVITIES ARE ASSOCIATED WITH POSITIVE OUTCOMES?

As noted at several points in previous discussions, whether shelters do more of specific activities and even how close they come to implementing best practices is only important if the activities actually impact outcomes. One of the first questions asked of shelter directors in the case study interviews to follow was how they defined success or what a successful shelter would look like to them. While live release rate is a critical indicator of success, they also mentioned a variety of other potential indicators of successful shelters, including:

- Increasing numbers of licensed dogs (and cats).
- Higher rates of spay/neuter in the service area.
- Decreased admissions as a result of spay/neuter programs.
- Increasing “surrender retentions” whereby owners receive assistance to keep their pets in their homes.
- Decreased waiting lists for admission.
- Reduced numbers of animals returned after adoption.
- Fewer bites by community animals.
- Lower incidences of disease outbreaks in the shelter.
- Less prevalent animal cruelty in the community and/or higher prosecutions.
- Improved community relations and public perceptions.

The most appropriate outcomes on which to judge any shelter will vary depending on shelter mission and purpose of the organization, for example, animal controls and shelters which are part of municipal health departments typically emphasize public safety so bite prevention and humane education are important success indicators. Nonprofit humane societies may emphasize adoptions and animal welfare more generally in the community. The identification of outcome variables for any study of animal shelters is dependent on, and limited by, the nature of available data and the realities of the types of data that shelters collect. As one shelter director stated, “data, data,

data. You have to collect your data to substantiate your programs.” However, many shelters do not keep data on the types of outcome measures just noted and other outcomes, such as community perceptions, are inherently difficult to measure. The shelters that do keep data on some of the indicators may not be representative of all shelters in that they may either have the technical resources to collect the data (the Humane Society of Huron Valley has a staff person responsible for data collection and system management) or could be the more successful shelters wanting to highlight their programs. And, even if the data were collected, shelters may be reluctant to provide any information that is not specifically required by the state. As a result, the statewide reporting data are used as the primary indicators of success although the case studies to follow highlight the other types of outcome data.

Here, several outcome variables are explored: self-assessed success as indicated by shelter directors on the survey, state inspection reports, complaints to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), and, most importantly, kill rates and change in kill rates over time. While these variables miss many of the elements of successful shelters just noted, they are available for shelters across the state of Michigan. It is the last two variables that are absent from the bulk of previous literature and constitute the definitive test of best practice activities. It should also be noted that the MARD annual shelter activity reports are relatively limited in the types of data required and some shelters do not follow guidelines for breaking down different statistics. Specifically, the form asks for data separately for dogs, cats, ferrets, and “others” such as bats. Data include intakes, adoptions, other disposition (return to owner, sold live for research, and transferred), and euthanasia (of shelter animals and owner requested). Thus, the reporting form does not require some of the information included on the Asilomar Advanced Animal Statistics form which many shelters use as a separate set of “books” to apply for grants ([http://shelteranimalscount.org/docs/default-source/DataResources/sac\\_basicdatamatrix.pdf?sfvrsn=2](http://shelteranimalscount.org/docs/default-source/DataResources/sac_basicdatamatrix.pdf?sfvrsn=2)). Items missing from the MDARD form include: breakdowns of the types of animals found by the public, transfers, and owner surrenders (healthy, treatable, etc.); breakdowns for the types of animals adopted, outgoing transfers, and returned to owners (healthy, treatable, etc.); more detail on the types of animals euthanized (healthy and different categories of treatable and unhealthy); and died or lost in care. All of these data are considered when calculating the “ending shelter count” which would also include animals alive and still

in the shelter ([www.lollypop.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2011\\_ASILOMARSTATS.pdf](http://www.lollypop.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2011_ASILOMARSTATS.pdf)). Again, for this research, data were limited to those contained in the MDARD reports and to those data that shelters uniformly provided, and only intakes and euthanasia were used to calculate kill rates for all animals.

It is unlikely that all best practices affect all outcomes. Therefore, specifically for the many shelters with limited budgetary and staffing resources, knowing which processes and activities can achieve the greatest benefit in terms of live release is essential. The following analyses focus on this question.

## Outcome Variables

On the survey shelter directors were asked to indicate their level of perceived success. In addition, various other outcome data were also collected. Kill rates were calculated for the years 2012–15 to get a sense of outcomes before and after the period of the survey. Kill data for 2016 became available at the time this research was conducted; however, there were significant missing data and Michigan shelters recommended that the data not be used until MDARD had a chance to update and clean the set. Change in kill rates between 2012 and 2015 was also calculated. Inspection reports from 2013 to 2016 were collected and coded as were complaints to MDARD from the same time period.

Euthanasia rates across the responding Michigan shelters are relatively low with means ranging from 22% in 2012 to just fewer than 17% in 2015 (Fig. 6.1). Median kill rates are even lower; again, some extremely high values have pulled the mean

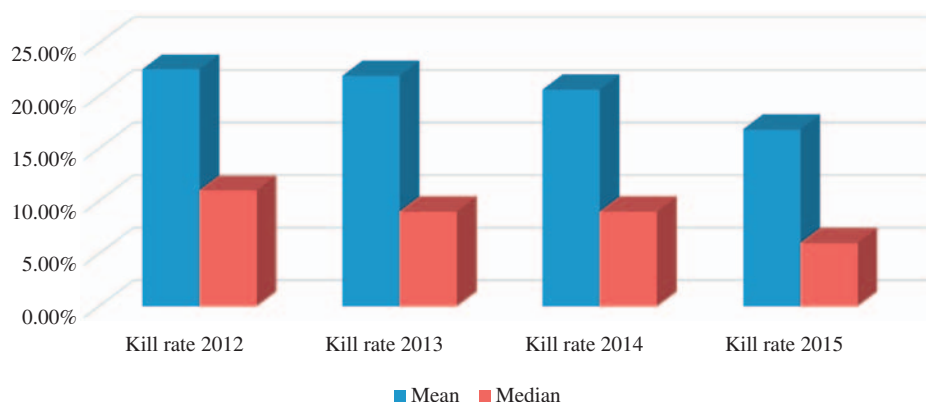


**Figure 6.1** Mean and median kills rates over time.

higher than the median. Median euthanasia rates range from 11% in 2012 to just 6% in 2015. Over the course of the period from 2012 to 2015, overall kill rates in responding shelters dropped by an average (mean) of just over 6% percentage points. Trends in kill (and conversely save) rates are clearly shown in [Fig. 6.1](#) as is the large difference between mean and median rates. Clearly both mean and median kill rates are consistently dropping over time in Michigan shelters. Yet, there remains wide variation among shelters in their rates with enough shelters with very high kill rates to pull the means higher than the medians. These high kill shelters have some commonalities as shown in [Table 6.1](#). This suggests that state regulators, policy entrepreneurs, shelter partners, and the general public could easily identify shelters with particular traits for intensive efforts at change.

[Table 6.1](#) provides data on the 10 shelters responding to the survey which had the highest average kill rates over the 4 years covered by the study. There are several striking commonalities. Most of the shelters are open-intake and all are financed by either a county or city contract. While one of the shelter facilities is only a year old, the majority are over 40. Numbers of staff are quite small particularly when considered on an animal per capita basis. Six of the shelters serve urban areas and all but two of the shelters serve communities with median household incomes under the state median of \$49,576. The shelters with the poorest outcomes vary in the number of volunteers, capacity, and budget size. Two of the shelters receive their animals as relinquishments but the rest intake primarily stray animals or equal numbers of stray and relinquished animals. In short, it appears clear that the struggling shelters are primarily urban, municipally operated, open access, and serving lower income communities. While it will be shown later in the book that variables such as budgets, organizational structure, and even open versus limited intake do not, in and of themselves, correlate with outcomes in terms of kill rates, it is clear that the poorest overall shelters share some important traits and thus must overcome much to be able to be successful. However, improvement is not impossible for such shelters as two on this list are among the most improved shelters in the state in terms of save rates.

For the population of shelters in Michigan the mean kill rates for 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 were 23%, 19%, 19%, and 18%, respectively. Medians were 13%, 9%, 8%, and 8% in each of the 4 years. Overall, for the population of shelters in Michigan, the kill rate has dropped an average of 7% over the time period. This provides confidence that responding shelters

### Table 6.1 Traits of the Top 10 Highest Kill Shelters

|    | Facility Age | Type    | Funding Model | \$Budget  | Capacity | #staff | #volunteers | Animal Source    | Location | Community Income | Mean Kill Rate % |
|----|--------------|---------|---------------|-----------|----------|--------|-------------|------------------|----------|------------------|------------------|
| 1  | 50           | Limited | County        | 90,193    | NA       | NA     | NA          | Stray            | Urban    | \$54,582         | 36               |
| 2  | 01           | Open    | County        | 600,000   | 320      | 12     | 500         | Stray/relinquish | Urban    | \$44,993         | 27               |
| 3  | 89           | Open    | City          | 1,200,000 | 250      | 14     | 20          | Stray            | Urban    | \$42,300         | 24               |
| 4  | 50           | Open    | County        | 972,600   | 112      | 15     | 25          | Stray            | Urban    | \$47,476         | 22               |
| 5  | NA           | Open    | County        | NA        | NA       | 02     | NA          | NA               | Urban    | \$53,063         | 22               |
| 6  | 15           | Limited | County        | 200,995   | 57       | 02     | 25          | Relinquish       | Rural    | \$42,024         | 18               |
| 7  | 40           | Open    | County        | 60,080    | 47       | 02     | 05          | Stray/relinquish | Rural    | \$38,307         | 16               |
| 8  | 41           | Open    | County        | 401,571   | 140      | 08     | 45          | Relinquish       | Rural    | \$40,219         | 16               |
| 9  | 45           | Open    | County        | 180,000   | 42       | 02     | 113         | Stray/relinquish | Rural    | \$41,912         | 16               |
| 10 | 45           | Open    | County        | 1,600,000 | 300      | 16     | 100         | Stray            | Urban    | \$42,327         | 15               |

are not unrepresentative in their performance indicators; that is, it is not the case that only the more effective shelters responded.

Michigan's licensed animal shelters are supposed to be inspected by MDARD once every year and there is also a complaint process whereby citizens or other concerned individuals can file complaints against specific shelters with MDARD. It was hoped that inspection violations and complaints would constitute useful outcome variables in addition to the kill rates. It seems reasonable to expect that shelters with more violations and complaints have lower quality animal care and, potentially, poorer outcomes. However, the data show that there is little variation in violations and almost none in complaints (Table 6.2). Overall, most shelters are written up for one or no violations and most have no complaints within a 1-year period. Violation rates for the population of Michigan shelters is very similar to the sample; mean = 1.65; median = 1.00; range = 0–16 again indicating that there is no systematic bias in the shelters that responded to the survey compared to the population. While total violations are used in the correlation analysis to follow the small number of complaints renders that outcome variable unsuitable for further analysis; the nature of complaints is discussed descriptively below.

MDARD receives complaints from the public regarding specific animal shelters and conducts inspections in response to those complaints. Complaint data from 2013 to 2016 were collected. There are few complaints registered with MDARD, indeed there were only 10 complaints over the time period; only a single shelter had more than one complaint (the other eight shelters had only a single complaint). The 10 complaints related to three types of concerns: unclean/unsafe facilities, animal health, and improper hold times. Four complaints related to facilities that were unclean or unsafe for the animals and three

**Table 6.2 Outcome Descriptives**

|                           | Mean   | Median | Minimum | Maximum | SD   |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|------|
| Kill rate 2012            | 22.45% | 11%    | 00      | 100%    | 0.25 |
| Kill rate 2013            | 21.85% | 9%     | 00      | 100%    | 0.30 |
| Kill rate 2014            | 20.58% | 9%     | 00      | 100%    | 0.29 |
| Kill rate 2015            | 16.77% | 6%     | 00      | 100%    | 0.28 |
| Change in kill rate 12–15 | –6.40% | –3%    | –54%    | +100%   | 0.22 |
| Total violations          | 1.71   | 1.00   | 00      | 16      | 2.67 |

involved poor veterinary care for the animals in the shelter (including two that involved sick kittens being placed for adoption). Two complaints involved animals that were euthanized within the mandated stray holding period (which the state is no longer enforcing). In 6 of the 10 cases, inspections of the shelters found no violations or only minor violations that had already been corrected according to MDARD follow-up reports. Thus, in only three cases did the subsequent MDARD inspections conclude that violations had occurred. From the nature of the complaints, it is clear that in half of the cases the concerns had to have been raised by volunteers or staff inside the shelter; that is, the nature and specificity of the complaints were beyond what the general public would be likely to observe visiting the shelter. All but one of the shelters with complaints was an open intake, county animal control and three of the shelters have very low budgets; there were no high budget shelters among those with complaints. Thus, while no definitive analysis can be conducted, it appears that county shelters with lower budgets are more likely to be subject to complaints. There appears not to be a relationship between complaints and inspection violations.

It is useful to examine the correlations among the outcome variables to get a sense of the extent to which they are measuring success in the same way (Table 6.3). Perceived success appears to have little relationship to actual success, save for 2013 where shelters with executive directors that perceive

**Table 6.3 Correlations Among Outcome Variables**

|                        | Perceived<br>Success | Kill<br>Rate<br>2012 | Kill<br>Rate<br>2013 | Kill<br>Rate<br>2014 | Kill<br>Rate<br>2015 | Change<br>in Rate | Violations |
|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Perceived<br>success   | 1.00                 | 0.14                 | 0.36**               | 0.13                 | 0.05                 | −0.07             | 0.40**     |
| Kill rate 2012         | 0.14                 | 1.00                 | 0.74**               | 0.85**               | 0.65**               | −0.37**           | 0.27*      |
| Kill rate 2013         | 0.36**               | 0.74**               | 1.00                 | 0.58**               | 0.41**               | −0.29*            | 0.06       |
| Kill rate 2014         | 0.13                 | 0.85**               | 0.58**               | 1.00                 | 0.62**               | −0.15             | 0.21       |
| Kill rate 2015         | 0.05                 | 0.65**               | 0.41**               | 0.62**               | 1.00                 | 0.46**            | 0.16       |
| Change in kill<br>rate | −0.07                | −0.37**              | −0.29*               | −0.15                | 0.46**               | 1.00              | −0.17      |
| Violations             | 0.40**               | 0.27*                | 0.06                 | 0.21                 | 0.16                 | −0.17             | 1.00       |

\*significant at the .05 level;

\*\*significant at the .01 level.

greater success have a lower kill rate. Kill rates are significantly correlated across the years in that shelters with higher rates in 1 year have higher rates in all years. Shelters with higher kill rates in 2012 and 2013 have seen significant decreases in their kill rates over time. However, shelters that experienced an increase in kill rates over time had a higher kill rate in 2015. Inspection violations are significantly correlated with perceived success and kill rates only in 2012 (which is prior to the inspection data). Specifically, shelter directors do not feel successful at all if they run shelters with more inspection violations. Shelters with higher kill rates in 2012 have more inspection violations in later years.

## **Barriers to, and Facilitators of, Success**

Shelter directors were asked, in open ended questions, to identify the three most important barriers to and facilitators of their success. It is clear from their responses that finances and the shelter facility are viewed as the most important barriers to success. Similar results have been found in the 2006 study of Ohio shelters, a study of UK shelters conducted in 2017, and one focusing on cat shelters in Sweden in 2009 (Eriksson, Loberg, & Andersson, 2009; Stavisky, Brennan, Downes, & Dean, 2017). However, a number of other issues were also mentioned by relatively high percentages of the respondents, including: lack of community awareness about the shelter and its needs; lack of knowledge in the community about proper animal care and poor care practices such as lack of spay/neuter, microchipping or other types of animal identification, failure to look for lost pets, and allowing animals to roam; insufficient volunteers; and problems with internal management and the Board of Directors (Table 6.4). Thus, as will become clearer later, while directors see finances and facility issues as barriers, volunteers and leadership problems also are frequently mentioned. The lack of proper humane education and care practices within the communities the shelters serve are also major concerns. A recent survey of shelter workers also identified wider social problems such as the number of animals in need, unrealistic owner expectations and choices about pet ownership including preferences for “status dogs” such as pit bull mixes, lack of appropriate population management (spay/neuter), and lack of education in the community about animal care and needs as some of the most important challenges to their organizations (Stavisky et al., 2017). Concerns about insufficient resources

**Table 6.4 Most Important Barriers**

| <b><i>First Most Important Barrier</i></b>  | <b><i>% Identifying as #1 Barrier</i></b> |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Adoption challenges (nature of animals)     | 06                                        |
| Facility (age, capacity)                    | 14                                        |
| Finances                                    | 44                                        |
| Community awareness of shelter              | 09                                        |
| Lack of knowledge/poor treatment of animals | 12                                        |
| Lack of volunteers/fosters                  | 05                                        |
| Lack of staff                               | 03                                        |
| Size of the problem                         | 03                                        |
| Government/public policy                    | 03                                        |
| Internal issues/Board                       | 00                                        |
| <b><i>Second Most Important Barrier</i></b> | <b><i>% Identifying as #2 Barrier</i></b> |
| Adoption challenges (nature of animals)     | 03                                        |
| Facility (age, capacity)                    | 13                                        |
| Finances                                    | 28                                        |
| Community awareness of shelter              | 10                                        |
| Lack of knowledge/poor treatment of animals | 10                                        |
| Lack of volunteers/fosters                  | 15                                        |
| Lack of staff                               | 10                                        |
| Size of the problem                         | 05                                        |
| Government/public policy                    | 02                                        |
| Internal issues/Board                       | 03                                        |
| <b><i>Third Most Important Barrier</i></b>  | <b><i>% Identifying as #3 Barrier</i></b> |
| Adoption challenges (nature of animals)     | 09                                        |
| Facility (age, capacity)                    | 26                                        |
| Finances                                    | 18                                        |
| Community awareness of shelter              | 15                                        |
| Lack of knowledge/poor treatment of animals | 07                                        |
| Lack of volunteers/fosters                  | 06                                        |
| Lack of staff                               | 03                                        |
| Size of the problem                         | 00                                        |
| Government/public policy                    | 07                                        |
| Internal issues/Board                       | 09                                        |

were placed in this larger frame about the extent of community need for services.

Fig. 6.2 provides a graphic summary of the information in the forgoing table. Here, the importance of lack of finances as a

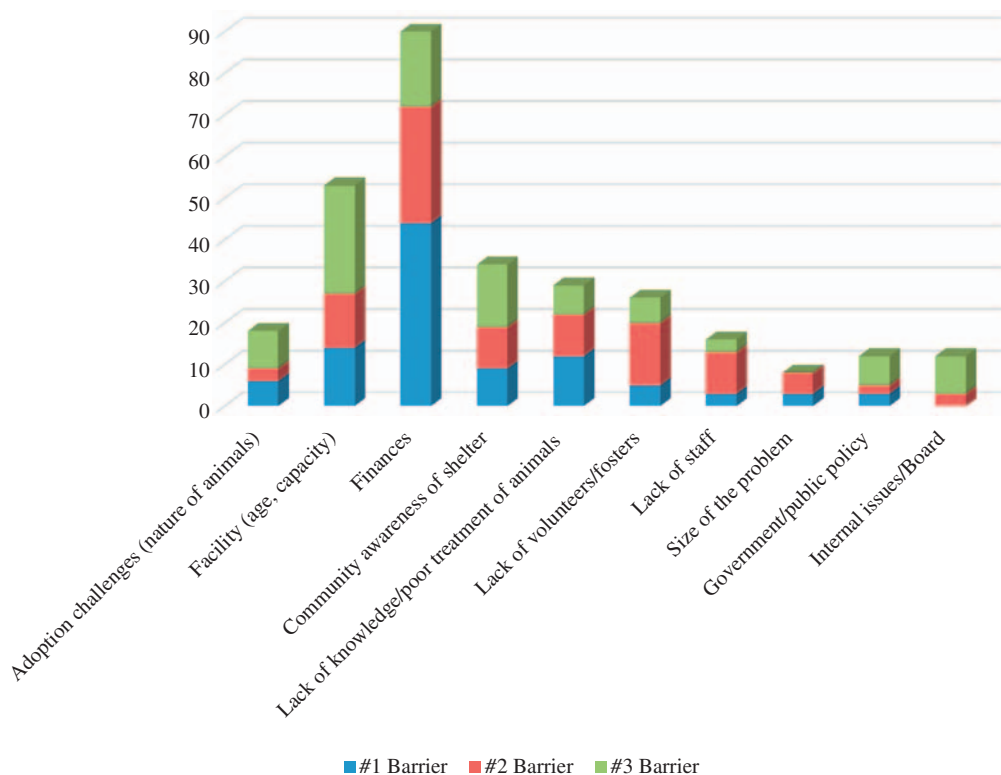


**Figure 6.2** Barrier summary.

perceived barrier stands out both in the total number of mentions and the times that it appeared as the first mentioned barrier. While the nature of the facility is frequently mentioned as a barrier it tends to be raised as only the third most important barrier. Issues related to the community are frequently mentioned as a first barrier both related to lack of knowledge about proper animal care, particularly spay/neuter, and in limited awareness about the shelter and its activities. This of course, can be tied to finances since lack of community awareness can impact donations.

It seems clear that the most important facilitators of success are people resources; staff and volunteers (Table 6.5). Thus, although finances and facilities are seen as barriers, facilitators of success lie in the people that work in the shelter—indeed staff and volunteers are more important than donors in the success of the shelters' missions. Other important facilitators of success are the values demonstrated by these individuals;

## Table 6.5 Most Important Facilitators

| <i><b>First Most Important Facilitator</b></i>  | <b>% Identifying as #1 Facilitator</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Love/compassion/honesty                         | 13                                     |
| Staff                                           | 21                                     |
| Vets                                            | 00                                     |
| Leadership/Board/Vision                         | 06                                     |
| Community support                               | 07                                     |
| Networking/other shelters and rescues           | 03                                     |
| Volunteers                                      | 23                                     |
| Donations/donors                                | 10                                     |
| Social media/public outreach                    | 07                                     |
| Facility                                        | 06                                     |
| Programs                                        | 04                                     |
| No kill philosophy                              | 00                                     |
| <i><b>Second Most Important Facilitator</b></i> | <b>% Identifying as #2 Facilitator</b> |
| Love/compassion/honesty                         | 00                                     |
| Staff                                           | 10                                     |
| Vets                                            | 09                                     |
| Leadership/Board/Vision                         | 06                                     |
| Community support                               | 08                                     |
| Networking/other shelters and rescues           | 08                                     |
| Volunteers                                      | 18                                     |
| Donations/donors                                | 12                                     |
| Social media/public outreach                    | 19                                     |
| Facility                                        | 03                                     |
| Programs                                        | 08                                     |
| No kill philosophy                              | 00                                     |
| <i><b>Third Most Important Facilitator</b></i>  | <b>% Identifying as #3 Facilitator</b> |
| Love/compassion/honesty                         | 08                                     |
| Staff                                           | 06                                     |
| Vets                                            | 06                                     |
| Leadership/Board/Vision                         | 14                                     |
| Community support                               | 11                                     |
| Networking/other shelters and rescues           | 05                                     |
| Volunteers                                      | 06                                     |
| Donations/donors                                | 11                                     |
| Social media/public outreach                    | 09                                     |
| Facility                                        | 05                                     |
| Programs                                        | 15                                     |
| No kill philosophy                              | 06                                     |

compassion, love for animals, honesty, and commitment to their work. Commitment of the local community is also an important facilitator of success often enhanced by outreach and the use of social media by the shelters. Programs are frequently mentioned as facilitators of success as are the networks of other rescues and shelters that are used as transfer partners for animals. City shelters frequently do not have the capacity for, or are not allowed by city ordinance to, offer animals within their care for adoption. These shelters must rely on transfer partners—other licensed rescues and shelters—to pull their animals and place them up for adoption or into foster care. Shelters also transfer animals with special needs within the network based on the medical and behavior resources of the partners. Finally, leadership in the shelter and by the Board of Directors is another frequently mentioned facilitator of success. All of this suggests that limitations in resources and capacity might be compensated for by dedicated staff, volunteers, rescue partners, and strong leadership. The balance of these factors in achieving desired outcomes will be explored more directly in the correlation and regression analyses to follow.

The relationship between the number of times a facilitator is mentioned and the order in which is mentioned is summarized in [Fig. 6.3](#). Volunteers and staff are the most likely facilitators to be mentioned first yet the overall importance of volunteers is greater than staff. While the use of social media and shelter programs are frequently mentioned facilitators they tend to be mentioned in a secondary role. Donations and donors on the other hand are not mentioned as frequently but are more likely to be mentioned as the number one facilitator. Although identified as facilitators, a no kill philosophy and the facility are the least frequently mentioned.

## Factors Affecting Outcomes

### Traits of Shelters and Outcomes

The following analysis focuses on the correlates of the various outcome measures: perceived success, kill rates in 2012–15, change in kill rates, and total inspection violations noted by MDARD. Based on the closed-ended questions, shelter directors perceive that their organization is significantly more successful if they have more administrative and animal care staff and a higher capacity to house animals ([Table 6.6](#)). More total revenue (among those that are nonprofit and file 990s) also is related to

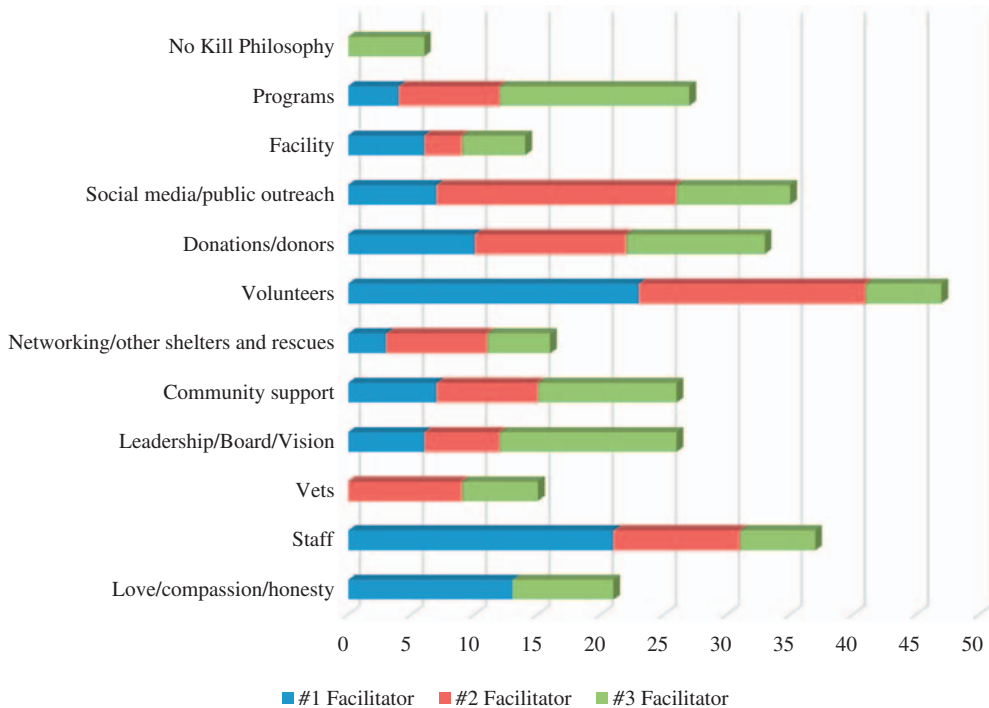


**Figure 6.3** Facilitator summary.

higher perceived success. Finally, directors in shelters that serve cats to a large extent also feel more successful than those serving dogs or other types of animals.

The correlates of actual success as indicated by kill rates are somewhat different. Change in kill rate over time is a particularly critical outcome variable, but one with only three significant correlates: kills rates have dropped in shelters with contracts to provide countywide services, provide care to small mammals to a greater extent, and that have more donations. For individual years, age of organization and the facility are important with older ages being related to higher kill rates. Limited intake shelters which can pick and choose among animals to admit generally have lower kill rates. County shelters generally have higher kills rates, but again, have also seen significant decreases in their kill rates. Finally, the types of animals served are generally correlated with kill rates, with shelters serving a higher proportion of cats having lower kill rates while those with higher percentages of small mammals, birds, reptiles, and farm animals have higher kill rates. There are no

**Table 6.6 Correlations Between Traits  
and Outcome Variables**

|                       | Perceived<br>Success | Kill<br>Rate<br>2012 | Kill<br>Rate<br>2013 | Kill<br>Rate<br>2014 | Kill<br>Rate<br>2015 | Change<br>in Rate | Violations |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Urban/rural           | 0.00                 | 0.14                 | 0.15                 | 0.21                 | -0.03                | -0.11             | 0.05       |
| Age                   | -0.01                | 0.33*                | 0.06                 | 0.33*                | 0.17                 | -0.20             | 0.32*      |
| Age facility          | 0.24                 | 0.29*                | 0.14                 | 0.27*                | 0.10                 | -0.11             | 0.25       |
| #full time staff      | -0.03                | 0.06                 | 0.02                 | 0.07                 | 0.02                 | -0.21             | 0.02       |
| #part time staff      | -0.07                | -0.18                | -0.13                | -0.23                | -0.16                | 0.11              | 0.01       |
| #admin staff          | -0.35**              | 0.05                 | -0.04                | -0.03                | 0.01                 | -0.14             | -0.01      |
| #animal care<br>staff | -0.31*               | -0.12                | -0.09                | -0.14                | -0.09                | 0.06              | -0.14      |
| #medical staff        | -0.13                | -0.08                | -0.05                | -0.08                | -0.09                | 0.04              | -0.10      |
| #volunteers           | -0.21                | 0.13                 | 0.01                 | 0.25                 | 0.06                 | -0.03             | 0.03       |
| Board                 | 0.06                 | 0.14                 | 0.26*                | 0.19                 | 0.22                 | -0.14             | -0.03      |
| Budget                | -0.16                | -0.02                | -0.05                | 0.00                 | -0.03                | 0.07              | 0.12       |
| Open                  | -0.10                | 0.13                 | 0.01                 | 0.15                 | 0.06                 | 0.03              | -0.02      |
| Limited               | -0.03                | -0.29*               | -0.20                | -0.30*               | -0.04                | 0.25              | -0.03      |
| County                | -0.21                | 0.37**               | 0.12                 | 0.33*                | 0.22                 | -0.36**           | 0.02       |
| City                  | 0.11                 | -0.05                | -0.03                | -0.04                | 0.01                 | 0.08              | 0.19       |
| With contract         | -0.08                | -0.13                | -0.11                | -0.17                | -0.10                | 0.08              | 0.17       |
| Without contract      | 0.03                 | -0.18                | 0.00                 | -0.22                | -0.10                | 0.15              | -0.16      |
| Donations/grants      | -0.38*               | 0.49**               | 0.47**               | 0.29                 | 0.05                 | -0.44*            | 0.12       |
| Total revenue         | -0.37*               | 0.19                 | 0.18                 | -0.02                | -0.03                | 0.27              | 0.06       |
| Total expenses        | -0.33                | 0.11                 | 0.13                 | -0.04                | -0.04                | -0.19             | -0.01      |
| Total assets          | -0.34                | 0.14                 | 0.15                 | 0.01                 | -0.03                | -0.17             | -0.04      |
| Capacity              | -0.36*               | 0.24                 | -0.02                | 0.28                 | 0.15                 | -0.11             | 0.17       |
| Dogs                  | -0.03                | -0.03                | 0.22                 | -0.15                | -0.17                | -0.07             | -0.21      |
| Cats                  | 0.27*                | 0.15                 | 0.27**               | 0.06                 | 0.35**               | -0.21             | 0.10       |
| Small mammal          | 0.18                 | -0.37**              | -0.42**              | -0.31*               | -0.15                | 0.31*             | -0.06      |
| Birds                 | 0.14                 | -0.38**              | -0.13                | -0.49**              | -0.24                | 0.14              | -0.08      |
| Reptiles              | 0.14                 | -0.12                | -0.05                | -0.29*               | -0.16                | -0.09             | 0.10       |
| Farm                  | 0.15                 | -0.42**              | -0.17                | -0.51**              | -0.36**              | 0.14              | -0.09      |

\*significant at the .05 level;

\*\*significant at the .01 level.

significant correlations between a focus on dogs and kill rates. It should be noted that the negative correlation between serving cats and kill rates is at odds with research conducted in 2003 on Michigan shelters indicating that cats are more likely than dogs

to be euthanized (Bartlett, Bartlett, Walshaw, & Halstead, 2005). This could potentially be an artifact of the shelters responding to the survey which include several that specialize in cats and hence may be equipped to address more severe medical and behavioral issues.

The analysis is also notable for what is *not* correlated with kill rates: numbers of staff and volunteers, budget, financial status, urban or rural location, and capacity (although the latter is correlated with perceived success). The 2006 study of Ohio shelters by Lord and colleagues also found no significant correlations between expenses, employees, and the use of veterinary services and euthanasia rate. However, Rowan (1992) suggested that because larger shelters intake more animals they have higher euthanization rates. This relationship is not borne out here with the Michigan shelters, perhaps because it was done at a much later point in time. As will be discussed later, shelters with greater capacity also tend to have more staff and volunteers, allowing for the types of programs that are related to successful outcomes.

There is only one significant correlation between a shelter trait and total number of inspection violations during the period under study; older organizations have more violations. This again means that variables such as budget, the age of the facility, staffing and so on have no relationship with violations noted in annual MDARD inspections.

## Activities and Outcomes

Table 6.7 contains correlations between variables and indexes measuring shelter programs and activities and outcomes. Again, the ability to decrease kill rates over time is an important outcome. Shelters that have reduced their kill rates over time: provide more services at the time of adoption including information to the public but also investments in the animal in terms of medical care and microchipping; are those that participate in transfer programs to both send and receive animals; do not identify breed when animals are admitted; and do not adopt animals from the shelter. An examination of the shelters that have seen the greatest drop in kill rates includes some larger municipal facilities (such as Detroit Animal Care and Control) that were prohibited from adopting animals from the shelter by city ordinance at the time of the survey. However, the implementation of an intensive transfer program and the development of a network of shelter and rescue partners who accept adoptable animals have created the situation where active transfer programs allow shelters without adoptions to decrease kill rates. It also appears that greater

**Table 6.7 Correlations Between Activities and Outcome Variables**

|           | Perceived<br>Success | Kill<br>Rate<br>2012 | Kill<br>Rate<br>2013 | Kill<br>Rate<br>2014 | Kill<br>Rate<br>2015 | Change<br>in Rate | Violations |
|-----------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Incomm    | 0.23*                | 0.13                 | 0.36**               | 0.17                 | 0.31*                | 0.02              | 0.10       |
| Humane    | 0.10                 | 0.02                 | -0.09                | -0.11                | 0.23                 | -0.01             | 0.04       |
| Vmed      | -0.09                | -0.09                | -0.43                | 0.05                 | -0.01                | 0.19              | 0.16       |
| Vsoft     | 0.05                 | 0.18                 | 0.14                 | 0.33*                | 0.24                 | -0.07             | 0.13       |
| Vhard     | 0.24*                | 0.07                 | 0.28*                | 0.06                 | 0.19                 | -0.03             | -0.07      |
| Vskill    | 0.10                 | 0.09                 | 0.02                 | 0.16                 | 0.07                 | -0.10             | 0.11       |
| Doggold   | 0.24                 | 0.23                 | 0.20                 | 0.20                 | 0.05                 | -0.07             | 0.09       |
| Dogbasic  | 0.13                 | 0.15                 | 0.30*                | 0.24                 | 0.26*                | 0.12              | -0.02      |
| Dogpairs  | 0.05                 | 0.08                 | 0.01                 | -0.01                | -0.05                | -0.02             | 0.06       |
| Dogout    | 0.09                 | 0.23                 | 0.21                 | 0.32*                | 0.18                 | 0.00              | 0.02       |
| Catbasic  | 0.16                 | 0.27*                | 0.34*                | 0.28*                | 0.43**               | 0.00              | 0.07       |
| Catsout   | 0.09                 | 0.12                 | 0.05                 | 0.21                 | 0.19                 | 0.08              | 0.15       |
| Cathealth | 0.15                 | 0.11                 | 0.13                 | 0.25                 | 0.23                 | 0.19              | 0.20       |
| Legacy    | -0.11                | 0.15                 | 0.13                 | 0.13                 | 0.18                 | 0.03              | -0.40**    |
| Feeredu   | 0.03                 | -0.09                | -0.02                | 0.05                 | 0.14                 | 0.03              | -0.05      |
| Astand    | -0.08                | 0.06                 | 0.18                 | 0.22                 | 0.13                 | -0.04             | -0.07      |
| Aenhan    | 0.01                 | 0.34*                | 0.33*                | 0.25                 | 0.34**               | -0.37**           | -0.01      |
| Thealth   | 0.14                 | 0.16                 | -0.03                | 0.04                 | 0.22                 | 0.01              | -0.15      |
| Tskills   | 0.04                 | 0.18                 | 0.34*                | -0.03                | 0.21                 | -0.23             | -0.21      |
| Fclean    | 0.04                 | 0.05                 | 0.18                 | -0.13                | -0.03                | -0.06             | -0.19      |
| Sep       | 0.17                 | 0.13                 | 0.17                 | 0.15                 | 0.21                 | -0.02             | 0.29*      |
| Order     | 0.13                 | -0.05                | -0.21                | -0.11                | 0.13                 | 0.15              | 0.14       |
| Clinic    | 0.19                 | -0.12                | 0.14                 | 0.13                 | -0.04                | -0.03             | 0.09       |
| Staydog   | 0.16                 | -0.05                | -0.03                | -0.04                | 0.08                 | 0.00              | 0.05       |
| Staycat   | 0.17                 | -0.28*               | -0.34*               | -0.28*               | -0.34**              | 0.22              | -0.20      |
| Staypup   | 0.28*                | -0.19                | -0.07                | -0.06                | -0.13                | 0.17              | 0.02       |
| Staykit   | 0.03                 | -0.13                | -0.06                | -0.05                | -0.08                | 0.11              | -0.13      |
| Stayoth   | 0.17                 | 0.05                 | 0.46*                | -0.14                | -0.06                | -0.09             | -0.30      |
| Mission   | 0.12                 | -0.10                | 0.09                 | 0.09                 | -0.07                | 0.02              | -0.10      |
| Orgchart  | 0.19                 | -0.11                | 0.04                 | -0.18                | -0.08                | -0.04             | -0.12      |
| Full      | 0.19                 | 0.02                 | -0.08                | -0.12                | -0.12                | -0.10             | 0.18       |
| Ffoster   | 0.13                 | 0.27*                | 0.25                 | 0.35**               | 0.25                 | -0.06             | 0.17       |
| Noadmit   | 0.00                 | 0.42**               | 0.36**               | 0.45**               | 0.35**               | -0.25             | 0.12       |
| Euth      | -0.09                | -0.31*               | -0.14                | -0.34**              | -0.32*               | 0.01              | -0.22      |
| Tshelter  | -0.11                | -0.36**              | -0.01                | -0.33*               | -0.20                | 0.31*             | -0.28*     |

(Continued)

**Table 6.7 (Continued)**

|               | <b>Perceived<br/>Success</b> | <b>Kill<br/>Rate<br/>2012</b> | <b>Kill<br/>Rate<br/>2013</b> | <b>Kill<br/>Rate<br/>2014</b> | <b>Kill<br/>Rate<br/>2015</b> | <b>Change<br/>in Rate</b> | <b>Violations</b> |
|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Trescue       | -0.16                        | -0.30*                        | -0.06                         | -0.32*                        | -0.27*                        | 0.14                      | -0.22             |
| Rounds        | 0.02                         | 0.06                          | -0.05                         | -0.02                         | 0.06                          | 0.13                      | -0.04             |
| Transport     | -0.26*                       | 0.23                          | 0.04                          | 0.22                          | 0.12                          | -0.04                     | 0.08              |
| Checkin       | 0.20                         | 0.39**                        | 0.17                          | 0.34*                         | 0.28*                         | -0.05                     | 0.16              |
| ISO           | -0.14                        | 0.04                          | -0.01                         | 0.16                          | 0.17                          | 0.09                      | 0.02              |
| Vtrain        | 0.01                         | -0.22                         | -0.10                         | -0.11                         | -0.12                         | 0.19                      | -0.18             |
| Vapp          | -0.04                        | -0.05                         | -0.11                         | 0.03                          | 0.15                          | 0.17                      | 0.09              |
| Vspttrain     | 0.08                         | -0.06                         | -0.06                         | -0.03                         | 0.03                          | 0.11                      | 0.01              |
| Vupdate       | -0.05                        | -0.10                         | -0.15                         | -0.09                         | 0.03                          | 0.22                      | -0.12             |
| Hvisit        | 0.22                         | 0.03                          | 0.08                          | 0.01                          | -0.06                         | -0.02                     | 0.32*             |
| Adopt         | 0.55**                       | 0.51**                        | 0.74**                        | 0.30*                         | 0.30*                         | -0.43**                   | 0.29**            |
| Breed         | 0.27*                        | 0.07                          | -0.04                         | 0.16                          | 0.11                          | -0.48**                   | -0.02             |
| Behavior      | 0.05                         | 0.00                          | -0.09                         | -0.14                         | 0.03                          | -0.06                     | 0.21              |
| #behav        | 0.15                         | 0.19                          | 0.18                          | 0.21                          | 0.17                          | -0.17                     | 0.18              |
| Volboard      | 0.00                         | 0.14                          | 0.17                          | 0.25                          | 0.22                          | 0.03                      | 0.07              |
| Voldisp       | 0.03                         | -0.04                         | 0.07                          | 0.00                          | 0.11                          | 0.07                      | -0.13             |
| #walks        | -0.20                        | 0.03                          | 0.13                          | 0.09                          | 0.00                          | -0.03                     | 0.06              |
| #interactionD | -0.08                        | -0.15                         | -0.15                         | -0.08                         | -0.09                         | 0.05                      | -0.10             |
| #interactionC | -0.06                        | -0.28*                        | -0.32*                        | -0.10                         | -0.30*                        | 0.17                      | -0.10             |
| %dogF         | 0.21                         | -0.30*                        | -0.26                         | -0.21                         | -0.16                         | 0.16                      | -0.16             |
| %catF         | -0.26*                       | -0.21                         | -0.20                         | -0.21                         | -0.22                         | 0.07                      | -0.22             |
| %smmalF       | -0.19                        | 0.15                          | 0.01                          | -0.02                         | 0.11                          | -0.15                     | -0.10             |
| %birdF        | -0.15                        | 0.06                          | 0.04                          | -0.10                         | -0.06                         | -0.025                    | 0.08              |
| %reptileF     | -0.11                        | 0.24                          | 0.31*                         | 0.61**                        | 0.38**                        | 0.09                      | 0.03              |
| %otherF       | -0.09                        | 0.07                          | 0.12                          | 0.03                          | 0.06                          | -0.07                     | -0.07             |
| Handfeed      | -0.17                        | 0.04                          | 0.02                          | -0.05                         | 0.01                          | 0.06                      | -0.03             |
| Bowl feed     | 0.07                         | -0.14                         | -0.09                         | -0.17                         | -0.12                         | 0.07                      | -0.01             |
| Toyfeed       | -0.02                        | 0.20                          | 0.22                          | -0.13                         | 0.31*                         | -0.13                     | 0.03              |

\*significant at the .05 level;

\*\*significant at the .01 level.

investment in the animal and more information and support for adoptive families can increase adoptions and hence lower kill rates. These adoption services should reduce returns of adopted animals; data to test this premise are not typically provided in the annual shelter activity reports.

There are several variables that are significantly correlated with kill rates across several years. Shelters have lower kill rates

if they make greater use of volunteers for foster care and other hands-on animal care, training, and enrichment. They also have lower kill rates if they are more involved in the community. Increased enrichment for dogs and cats is associated with lower kill rates as are enhanced adoption services. Shelters that are able to restrict intake when they are full have lower kill rates. Shelters that transfer animals when they are full have higher kill rates although the relationship probably runs from kill rate to the desire to transfer to avoid even higher euthanasia rates. Obviously shelters that euthanize when the shelter is full have higher kill rates as well. Shelters that do not adopt animals from the facility have higher kill rates. For shelters that receive transferred animals, kill rates are higher if there are no medical protocols in place to assess intakes before they come in contact with other animals in the shelter. A number of the shelters in the state transfer animals (typically puppies) from southern shelters because they tend to be scarce in Michigan shelters but plentiful in southern ones. Parvo is a risk with such puppies and exposure to existing shelter animals without a medical check or isolation time can increase the need for euthanasia. Fewer hours of interaction between shelter cats and human staff or volunteers also increases kill rates. Finally, shelters with more reptiles in foster have higher kill rates.

There are only five significant correlations between shelter activities and inspection violations. Shelters that charge adoption premiums for young and pure-bred animals have more inspection violations. But those shelters that are able to separate animals to minimize sound and sight lines have fewer violations. Those that transfer animals to other shelters have significantly more inspection violations, although the direction of causation might logically run from violations to transfers. Responding shelters that do not require home visits for their potential foster providers have more violations. Finally, shelters that are allowed to adopt animals directly from the facility have more inspection violations.

Basic features of the facilities tended to have little variation and did not lend themselves to factor analysis. All of the responding shelters have hand sanitizers available for staff and volunteers, for example. The presence of hand sanitizers for visitors is significantly correlated with lower kill rates in several of the years (Table 6.8). Shelters that remove animals for cleaning have lower kill rates. It is likely that none of these relationships are causal but rather are a function of the age of the facility; older shelters have higher kill rates in two of the years of data. Finally, shelters that do not remove animals from enclosures during cleaning

**Table 6.8 Correlations Between Facilities and Outcome Variables**

|           | Perceived Success | Kill Rate 2012 | Kill Rate 2013 | Kill Rate 2014 | Kill Rate 2015 | Change in Rate | Violations |
|-----------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| Handstaff | N                 | N              | N              | N              | N              | N              | N          |
| Handvisit | 0.46**            | 0.36**         | 0.15           | 0.26           | 0.32*          | -0.11          | N          |
| Bins      | 0.04              | -0.02          | -0.02          | -0.08          | -0.05          | -0.04          | -0.01      |
| Removed   | 0.28*             | 0.26*          | 0.07           | 0.02           | 0.12           | -0.08          | 0.26*      |
| Tether    | -0.06             | 0.05           | 0.09           | -0.01          | 0.08           | -0.03          | -0.08      |
| Music     | 0.06              | -0.04          | 0.09           | -0.02          | -0.08          | 0.02           | -0.06      |
| Light     | 0.11              | 0.02           | -0.04          | 0.02           | 0.07           | 0.15           | 0.10       |
| Dogout    | -0.07             | 0.15           | 0.10           | -0.01          | -0.02          | -0.19          | 0.06       |

Note: Correlation cannot be calculated because all shelters have sanitizers for staff/volunteers.

\*significant at the .05 level;

\*\*significant at the .01 level.

**Table 6.9 Correlations Between Revenue Sources and Outcome Variables**

|             | Perceived Success | Kill Rate 2012 | Kill Rate 2013 | Kill Rate 2014 | Kill Rate 2015 | Change in Rate |
|-------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| CityC       | 0.36**            | 0.20           | 0.15           | 0.23           | 0.18           | -0.04          |
| CountyC     | -0.12             | 0.43**         | 0.18           | 0.51**         | 0.34**         | -0.26          |
| Donate      | 0.05              | -0.37**        | -0.07          | -0.50**        | -0.24          | 0.15           |
| AdoptR      | 0.07              | -0.39**        | -0.34*         | -0.35**        | -0.17          | 0.33*          |
| ClinicR     | 0.11              | -0.09          | -0.03          | -0.06          | -0.09          | 0.04           |
| Fundraise   | 0.04              | -0.30*         | -0.20          | -0.31          | -0.18          | 0.23           |
| Merchandise | 0.01              | -0.06          | -0.08          | -0.04          | 0.19           | 0.03           |

\*significant at the .05 level;

\*\*significant at the .01 level.

have a high number of inspection violations (although as noted, violations do not relate to this practice directly).

Several aspects of revenue sources are significantly correlated with the outcome variables (Table 6.9). Responding directors feel that their shelter is less successful if they have more revenue from a city contract, although actual kill rates are significantly higher in shelters that have more of their revenue from county contracts. Kill rates are significantly lower in shelters with more

revenue from donations and adoptions; more revenue from adoptions is significantly correlated with an increase in kill rates over time, however. Thus, revenue source appears to matter more to kill rates than does the absolute budget.

There was very little variation in the types of data that are collected for each animal upon entry into the shelter. For this reason, factor analysis was not viable for data management practices. All of the responding shelters assign a unique identification number, record general traits of the animal such as color and sex, the intake date, and basic health status. All shelters also collect owner provided-information on the animal if possible. Although the majority of shelters follow best practices in data management, these basic functions are unrelated to ultimate outcomes (Table 6.10).

Shelter directors were asked to indicate how euthanasia was done and by which staff members. All of the responding shelters use IV injection so there was no variation on that variable to run a correlation. Having a veterinarian perform euthanasia is significantly correlated in 3 years with lower kill rates and with a reduction in kill rates over time (Table 6.11). Using a certified euthanasia technician is related to higher kill rates and an increase in rates over time. These relationships are unlikely to

**Table 6.10 Correlations Between Data Management and Outcome Variables**

|           | Perceived Success | Kill Rate 2012 | Kill Rate 2013 | Kill Rate 2014 | Kill Rate 2015 | Change in Rate |
|-----------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| IDnum     | 0.16              | 0.05           | 0.21           | −0.07          | −0.05          | −0.06          |
| Bassess   | 0.08              | −0.10          | −0.10          | −0.08          | 0.07           | 0.21           |
| Idate     | N                 | N              | N              | N              | N              | N              |
| Stay      | 0.13              | −0.01          | −0.02          | −0.10          | −0.01          | N              |
| Mood      | −0.16             | −0.04          | −0.10          | −0.10          | −0.07          | 0.03           |
| Incidents | 0.13              | 0.00           | 0.24           | −0.06          | −0.08          | −0.11          |
| Health    | N                 | N              | N              | N              | N              | N              |
| Descript  | N                 | N              | N              | N              | N              | N              |
| Ownerinfo | −0.09             | N              | −0.06          | −0.07          | −0.06          | N              |

Note: Correlation cannot be calculated because all shelters record identifying information, intake date, health status, and color/size of animals.

\*significant at the .05 level;

\*\*significant at the .01 level.

be causal but rather are the likely results of medical resources in the shelters.

A number of the self-identified barriers to and facilitators of success are significantly correlated to outcome variables (Table 6.12). First, Chi squares are employed due to the nominal nature of the data; identification of barriers and facilitators was asked in an open-ended question. Because a smaller number of

**Table 6.11 Correlations Between Euthanasia and Outcome Variables**

|        | Perceived Success | Kill Rate 2012 | Kill Rate 2013 | Kill Rate 2014 | Kill Rate 2015 | Change in Rate |
|--------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Method | N                 | N              | N              | N              | N              | N              |
| Vet    | −0.09             | 0.50**         | 0.14           | 0.39**         | 0.29*          | −0.26          |
| Vetch  | 0.17              | −0.13          | −0.05          | −0.06          | −0.05          | 0.05           |
| CET    | 0.08              | −0.54**        | −0.18          | −0.40**        | −0.31*         | 0.39**         |
| Staff  | 0.11              | −0.16          | −0.06          | −0.05          | −0.07          | 0.17           |

Note: Correlation cannot be calculated because all responding shelters use injection.

\*significant at the .05 level;

\*\*significant at the .01 level.

**Table 6.12 Correlations<sup>a</sup> Between Barriers and Facilitators and Outcome Variables**

|              | Perceived Success | Kill Rate 2012 | Kill Rate 2013 | Kill Rate 2014 | Kill Rate 2015 | Change in Rate |
|--------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Barrier 1    | 23.96             | 15.65**        | 13.37*         | 10.35          | 13.43*         | 7.70           |
| Barrier 2    | 42.50**           | 16.591*        | 15.46*         | 7.35           | 8.34           | 8.23           |
| Barrier 3    | 51.52***          | 11.58          | 3.68           | 6.33           | 5.39           | 13.97*         |
| Facilitator1 | 32.39             | 16.31*         | 19.80**        | 14.75*         | 14.96*         | 7.44           |
| Facilitator2 | 28.92             | 17.07**        | 16.73**        | 12.36          | 9.55           | 13.45          |
| Facilitator3 | 22.90             | 6.78           | 6.22           | 6.13           | 8.76           | 16.47*         |

<sup>a</sup>Statistics in table represents Chi squares.

\*Significantly correlated at 0.10;

\*\*significantly correlated at 0.05;

\*\*\*significantly correlated at 0.01.

respondents wrote in answers than answered the close ended questions, the .10 level of significance is also included. Respondents were asked to write in three barriers and three facilitators. The first two mentions of barriers are significantly correlated with kill rates in both 2012 and 2013. In 2012 the first and second mentioned barriers related to kill rates are the ignorance of the public about proper animal care and the size of the local animal welfare problem. The third mentioned barriers correlated with higher kill rates included lack of staff. Other than this last barrier, respondents identifying problems outside the shelter tended to have higher kill rates. Whether this is a function of deflecting blame psychologically or represents a reality that poor local animal welfare conditions impact survival rates is impossible to tell but is a question ripe for additional research.

For 2013 the barriers associated with higher kill rates were similar but poor government policy was also included. While it was not possible to identify exactly which policies are problematic, other research has suggested that shelter workers would like to see mandatory spay/neuter and microchipping, increased governmental financial support of animal shelters, and methods to encourage landlords and low income housing sites to allow owners to keep their pets in order to reduce relinquishments (Stavisky et al., 2017).

No barriers are significantly correlated with kill rates in 2014. Only the first mention of barriers was significantly correlated with kill rates in 2015. Higher kills rates were present in shelters that mentioned lack of knowledge about animal care within the community as a barrier. Finally, the second and third mentions of barriers are significantly correlated with perceived success. Shelter directors feel that their organizations are less successful if they have the following barriers: the size of the animal welfare problem in the community; internal management issues or problems with their boards; and staff problems or insufficient staff.

The factors identified as facilitators of success are more interesting as they can be understood as contributing to positive outcomes. Facilitators that are significantly related to lower kill rates in 2012 include: high quality staff, strong leadership in the shelter and on the Board of Directors, community support, volunteers, donors, and strong programs. The second mention of facilitators included the following as significant correlates of lower kill rates: veterinary staff, and social media/public outreach. The third mention of facilitators included the following additional significant correlates of lower kill rates: the facility and a no-kill philosophy. The facilitators associated with lower kill rates in 2013 were similar but also included: the love,

compassion and honesty of the staff and leadership. Only the first mention of facilitators is significantly correlated with lower kill rates in 2014. Specifically, high-quality staff, strong leadership, community support, volunteers, donors, and programs are correlated with lower kill rates as in previous years. The facilitators significantly related to lower kill rates in 2015 also included leadership, community support, volunteers, donors, and programs.

Change in kill rate was only significantly correlated with the third mention of both a barrier and a facilitator. A lack of volunteers and fosters is the only barrier significantly correlated with an increase in kill rates over the time period. The most important facilitators of decreasing kill rates are: love/compassion among those in the shelter, high quality staff, community support, networking, volunteers, donors, and programs. Thus, it appears that lack of volunteers is a critical barrier to reducing kill rates and also a critical facilitator of lowering them. While many of the facilitators of single year save rates are included among those that led to reduced kill rates, for the first time, mention of networks is raised. Thus, the ability to work within networks of shelters and rescues is a significant facilitator of reducing kill rates, supporting the findings noted previously about the importance of transfer programs.

## **Modeling Positive Outcome Variables**

### **Average Kill Rates**

To facilitate the creation of a model of the correlates of overall kill rates, rates for the years under study were averaged to create a mean kill rate over the 4-year period. Variables found to be significantly correlated with kill rates in at least three of the individual years were entered into a path analysis with mean kill rate as the dependent variable. Path analysis examines causal models between a dependent variable and multiple independent variables. The variables should be logically arrayed from left to right in a clear time-ordered relationship. Operationally, path analysis consists of a series of multiple regression equations running from right to left; the first contains all the variables with average kill rates as the dependent, the second set uses each activity index as the dependent variables and so on. The statistic indicated on each path is the beta drawn from the successive multiple regressions. It should be remembered, however, that because the data are drawn from a

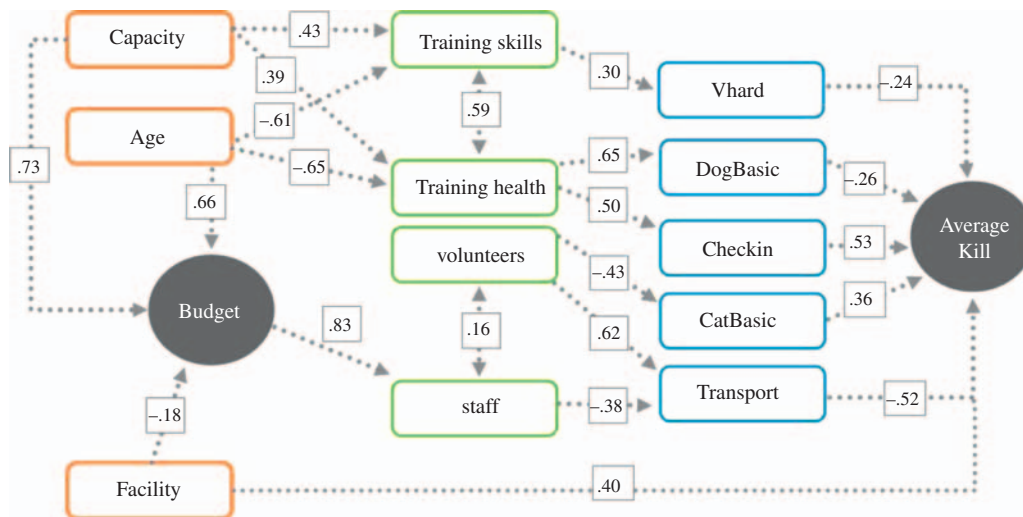


**Figure 6.4** Path analysis—average kill rates.

cross-sectional survey, the causal implications are based on logic with the paths indicating the strength of relationships (Everitt and Dunn, 1991). Fig. 6.4 shows the variables that remained significantly correlated with kill rates in the path analysis. The logic of the paths is that attributes of the shelter organization such as age, age of facility, and capacity affect the budgetary resources needed and available for animal welfare activities. There are a number of shelter traits that were explored as part of the path analysis but that did not correlate to budget or variables further on in the model: urban/rural location, open/limited intake, city/county/nonprofit entity most prominently. Organizations that have been in existence for a longer period of time and that have newer shelter facilities have higher budgets as do those with greater capacity for animals. Shelter capacity is also related to staff training for animal handling and animal health, however, higher capacities appear to reduce the amount of training. It may well be that shelters that have to respond to the needs of more animals do not have the luxury to engage in higher levels of staff training.

Higher budgets lead directly only to increased staffing; they have no direct impact on any variables further in the model. And even the connection to staffing is not as vital as might be expected with greater staffing leading only to greater use of transport programs to both receive and send animals.

In regards to people resources, shelters that have more staff also have more volunteers. Having more volunteers appears to

allow for greater levels of cat enrichment and for a more robust transport program both of which lead to lower kill rates. Just having more staff and volunteers is not particularly valuable absent proper training, however. More training for staff on basic animal handling skills leads to greater use of volunteers for hands-on animal handling and to higher levels of dog enrichment activities which both reduce kill rates. More training for staff on how to recognize medical problems leads to more dog enrichment activities and to proper isolation of animals when they are arriving at the shelter on a transfer from another shelter or rescue which also lowers average kill rates. Numbers of staff and volunteers are not correlated with training in the path analysis. Finally, newer facilities enjoy lower mean kill rates, the only exogenous variable directly connected to the outcome variable.

The use of volunteers for hands-on animal handling, basic dog and cat enrichment, transport programs, and medically assessing and isolating new and transferred animals lead directly to lower average kill rates.

## Modeling Change in Kill Rates

Variables that had significant bivariate correlations with change in kill rates were entered into a multiple regression and the reduced model, including only those variables that remained significantly correlated with kill rates in multiple regression, is shown in Table 6.13. Shelters have experienced decreasing kill rates if they indicated critical facilitators (programs, donors, volunteers, and networking) in the open-ended questions, transfer animals to other shelters when nearing or at capacity, and if they do not indicate the breed of the animal with the intake

**Table 6.13 Regression Change  
in Kill Rates**

|              | <i>B</i> | Std. Error | Beta  | Sig  |
|--------------|----------|------------|-------|------|
| Transfer     | 0.06     | 0.03       | 0.17  | 0.09 |
| Facilitators | −0.07    | 0.04       | −0.18 | 0.07 |
| Breed        | −0.48    | 0.19       | −0.26 | 0.01 |
| Constant     | 0.23     | 0.19       |       | 0.10 |

$R^2 = .13.$

information. Variables related to revenue and the nature of the shelter did not remain significantly correlated with reduced kill rates in multiple regression. (For the purpose of multiple regression, the mentions of programs, donors, volunteers, and networking were added to create an additive total of mentions of these facilitators for each responding shelter thus creating a single continuous variable.) Together these variables account for only 13% of the variation in change in kill rates, however. Clearly there are other variables not included on the survey, that impact kill rates; given the comprehensiveness of the instrument it is difficult to speculate on what those factors might be. The case studies to come help fill in this gap. While the path analysis explaining average kill rates does not include an  $R^2$  because successive individual (working backwards) regressions are run, an OLS regression with all the variables included in Fig. 6.4 resulted an  $R^2$  of .84. (This  $R^2$  resulted with training on medical issues and basic cat enrichment removed from the regression due to multicollinearity.) This suggests that average kill rates are well-predicted by the variables at hand although change in kill rates is not.

## Summary

A number of important findings are indicated by the analyses in this chapter. First, based on the outcome indicators it seems clear that the shelters responding to the survey do not differ systematically from the population of shelters in Michigan, that is, it is not the case that only the more successful shelters responded. This is in line with earlier findings indicating that the responding shelters are also similar in budgetary resources.

Kill rates are relatively low in Michigan shelters and have been declining in recent years. However, there are enough shelters with very high kill rates to skew measures of central tendency. There is little variation in the results of inspection reports and none in complaints. Overall, the indicators of shelter success do not correlate with each other; kill rates over time are significantly correlated. Perceived success in particular is not related to actual success in terms of kill rates.

When asked about barriers to and facilitators of success in open ended questions, shelter directors show a distinction between variables external and internal to the shelter itself. While directors predictably mentioned finances and facilities as barriers, the latter tended to be the third mentioned barrier.

Barriers related to the external community were more likely to take the top spot behind finances; lack of knowledge about proper animal care, failure to spay and neuter, the size of the local animal welfare problem, and demand for services. Primary facilitators of success tend to be internal to the shelter and most frequently related to people resources; staff and volunteers. Indeed, volunteers appeared to be a more important facilitator than even staff. This suggests that deficits in financial resources can be compensated for by people resources, particularly the “free” resource of volunteers.

While shelter directors feel more successful if they have highly effective staff (particularly administrative and animal care staff), capacity and resource variables such as staffing, budget, and urban/rural location are not directly correlated with actual outcomes in terms of kill rates. The specific activities that appear most important to reduction in kill rates are enhanced adoption services, an active transfer program, and not indicating breed for dogs available for adoption. Lower kill rates at any point in time are related to the use of volunteers for fostering, hands-on animal enrichment, increased human–animal interaction, and isolating animals received on transfer.

Multivariate models predicting average kill rates and reduction in kill rates over time suggest that transfer programs, lack of breed identification and facilitators in terms of quality programs, donors, volunteers, and participation in rescue networks are critical. Training of staff has direct impacts on the types of programs and activities that lead to lower kill rates. Thus, simply having more staff is not effective unless they are properly trained in animal handling and recognizing medical and stress issues in the animals. Budget again has no direct impact on outcomes, it is important only in that it allows for higher staffing (it also has no correlation to the training offered to staff). In short, the findings here strongly suggest that how much revenue a shelter has is not as important as how it is used. People resources are critically important. It is also important that some of the most significant barriers to shelter success lie outside the shelter itself within the larger community.

## **Check List for Recommended Best Practices**

The analyses in this chapter provide extensive detail on the relationships between traits of shelters, their activities, and positive outcome indicators. The relationships between the nature of the shelter facility and attributes such as whether it is open

or limited intake or a county or nonprofit shelter are not particularly easy for shelter administrators to manipulate to promote better outcomes. Thus, the check list to follow emphasizes activities that most shelters can undertake to achieve average lower kill rates and reduce kill rates over time.

- ✓ Increase involvement in the local community to promote spay/neuter, humane animal care, increased licensing, and microchipping.
- ✓ Increase involvement in the local community to cultivate donors, volunteers, and increased awareness of shelter activities.
- ✓ Provide increased enrichment for dogs and cats; particularly emphasizing human–animal interaction for both dogs and cats.
- ✓ Provide enhanced adoption services including counseling, animal interactions, microchips, and medical and behavioral information.
- ✓ Keep in touch with adopters to assess their views about the adoption experience, identify any challenges they are having with their animals, and to provide recommendations about support services.
- ✓ Emphasize people resources, particularly volunteers and ensure that volunteers are involved in hands-on activities with the animals.
- ✓ Create and maintain an active transfer program and be willing to accept transfers from other shelters when possible.
- ✓ Observe proper isolation time for animals arriving at the shelter on transfer particularly for young dogs from areas with high rates of parvovirus.
- ✓ Remove breed labels from dogs, favoring “mixed” particularly for pit bull type dogs.
- ✓ Provide high quality training for both staff and volunteers particularly related to animal handling and recognizing medical and stress issues.

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## AT THE SPEED OF TRUST: PROFILES OF THE MOST IMPROVED SHELTERS

The four shelters in the state that responded to the survey with the greatest improvement in save rates between 2012 and 2016 are Detroit Animal Care and Control (DACC), Genesee County Animal Control (GCAC), the Harbor Humane Society, and the Capital Area Humane Society (CAHS). Several observations can be made at the outset. First, there are significant differences between these four shelters in terms of where their save rates were in 2012 and in the magnitude of their improvement (Fig. 7.1). DACC and GCAC were, by any standards, not effective in terms of their save rates, with the situation for animal welfare at DACC the most dire. Harbor Humane was slightly better at the outset and hence did not experience as large an increase in save rates. CAHS, with an almost 70% save rate in 2012, was relatively successful and improved to a very high level of success. Thus, the challenges shelters face in trying to improve vary and even very poor shelters can make great strides in their outcomes. Indeed, DACC won the award for the most improved open intake shelter in the state for 2016 from the Michigan Pet Fund Alliance (<http://www.michiganpetfund.org/>). As will become clear as the discussion progresses, shelters move along a spectrum of improvement; success is not a steady state.

Table 7.1 provides information on the basic traits of the four most improved shelters. Three of the shelters are open intake serving a specific geographic area, counties in the cases of GCAC and Harbor, and a city for DACC. Because the CAHS is limited intake it can and does serve animals from across the state and also transfers animals in from southern shelters. Although it is limited intake, it has the highest annual intake numbers of the four shelters. While it is located in the rural Clinton County, it has a Lansing mailing address and is close to the state's capital and is next to the urbanized Ingham County.

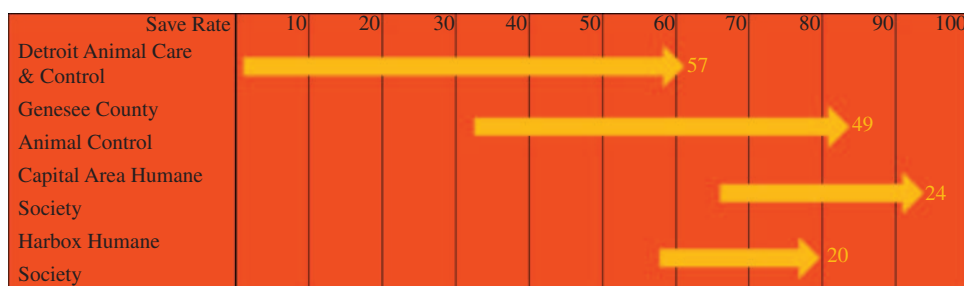


Figure 7.1 Range and magnitude of improvement.

**Table 7.1 Nature of the Most Improved Shelters**

|                          | DACC                          | GCAC              | Harbor Humane                  | CAHS            |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Organizational structure | Division of Health Department | County Department | Nonprofit with County Contract | Nonprofit       |
| Intake policy            | Open                          | Open              | Open                           | Limited         |
| Service area             | City of Detroit               | Genesee County    | Ottawa County                  | No service area |
| Transfer status          | Out only                      | Out only          | In                             | In              |
| 2016 Animal intake       | 2650                          | 2108              | 2082                           | 4257            |
| 2012 Save rate (%)       | 3                             | 35                | 59                             | 69              |
| 2016 Save rate (%)       | 60                            | 84                | 79                             | 93              |
| % Improvement            | 57                            | 49                | 20                             | 24              |
| Revenue                  | \$2,100,000                   | \$1,600,000       | \$750,000                      | \$2,151,981     |
| Age of facility          | 86                            | 45                | 30                             | 20              |
| Age of organization      | 89                            | 45                | 60                             | 80              |
| Staff size               | 14                            | 16                | 9                              | 12              |
| Capacity                 | 325                           | 200               | 197                            | 244             |
| Capacity/staff           | 23                            | 13                | 22                             | 20              |
| Veterinary clinic        | Internal only                 | Internal only     | Internal only                  | Internal only   |

CAHS is the only nonprofit shelter among the most improved. GCAC and Harbor serve as their county animal controls and are independent divisions within the county government; indeed, GCAC is funded by a dedicated millage so has significant financial independence from its county. DACC is a division of Detroit's health department moved there in 2015 after several years under the police department.

DACC and GCAC transfer animals out of their shelters but do not receive animals on transfers. Because of prohibitions on adoptions at the time of the research, all animals must leave DACC on a transfer either to another licensed shelter or a licensed rescue. In early 2018 DACC experimented with its first adoption event at the shelter. Money was received by the Friends of DACC and they were responsible for promotion for the event. For the first time, potential adopters were allowed to walk through the shelter to view the animals. Plans include regularly offering adoptions from the shelter facility. Since both shelters tend to operate at, or even beyond capacity, they are unable to accept transfers in. CAHS receives transfers from other shelters in the state and is one of the most regular partners for DACC. Both CAHS and Harbor have programs where they receive transfers of dogs and puppies from shelters in Southern states. Puppies are rare in shelters in Michigan and in many cases, adult pit bull mixes predominate. Participating in transfer programs allows puppies and younger non-bully dogs to move from the south to the north, meeting both local demand and reducing euthanasia rates in the south.

DACC is operating out of the oldest facility. Up until October 2017 they had been in an even older and substandard facility (Fig. 7.2). The Michigan Humane Society, a nonprofit shelter in



**Figure 7.2** Old DACC facility.

Detroit, built a new state-of-the-art shelter and donated their old building to the city for the use of DACC. The current facility remains antiquated, but represents a significant improvement in quality of life for both the animals and humans that work there.

Although Harbor Humane has less capacity than the other three shelters, they are relatively close in staff size and in the ratio between staff and capacity. DACC and CAHS have the largest budgets with the former provided by the city and the latter largely by donations. All of the shelters provide veterinary services to their animals but do not provide clinic services to the larger community. CAHS and Harbor hold low cost spay/neuter clinics for the public a couple of times per year; DACC and GCAC do not currently have the resources to do this.

The nature of the communities served by and surrounding the shelters has an important impact on the animal welfare challenges faced by the shelters and the potential resources available to address them (Table 7.2). DACC serves a significantly larger and more populous area than do the other three shelters. Thus, while the shelter capacity is similar, the need for animal control services is significantly larger. DACC's service area is also the most stressed economically with the highest population loss, the most residents of color, the largest number

### Table 7.2 Nature of Service Area

|                             | City of Detroit | Genesee County | Ottawa County | Clinton County <sup>a</sup> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Population 2016             | 672,795         | 408,615        | 282,250       | 39,233                      |
| Population change 10–16     | –5.8%           | –4.0%          | 7.0%          | 0%                          |
| % White                     | 11              | 75             | 93            | 97                          |
| % African American          | 83              | 21             | 02            | 02                          |
| % Hispanic                  | 07              | 03             | 10            | 01                          |
| % Foreign Born              | 05              | 02             | 06            | 02                          |
| # Households                | 255,740         | 165,268        | 96,283        | 14,796                      |
| # Housing units             | 349,170         | 190,970        | 102,495       | 18,974                      |
| Median value-owner occupied | \$42,300        | \$88,500       | \$155,400     | \$117,400                   |
| % Bachelors or more         | 14              | 19             | 31            | 17                          |
| Median household income     | \$25,764        | \$42,327       | \$58,989      | \$45,078                    |
| % In poverty                | 40              | 21             | 09            | 16                          |
| Persons per square mile     | 5144            | 669            | 468           | 44                          |
| Land area square miles      | 139             | 637            | 563           | 888                         |

<sup>a</sup>The Capital Area Humane Society is located in Clinton County, but primarily serves the Lansing/Ingham County area.

of households, the lowest housing values, lowest median incomes, and highest percent of the population in poverty. The extreme economic distress in Detroit presents significant challenges to DACC not present in Ottawa and Clinton Counties. Genesee, while more financially distressed than those two counties, has not experienced the extent of distress present in the city of Detroit.

The discussion to follow proceeds by providing background on, and a profile of, each shelter and the results of interviews and site visits. The concluding section of the chapter provides observations about commonalities and differences among the most improved shelters and draws lessons about the factors leading to improvement in outcomes more generally.

## **Detroit Animal Care and Control**

### **Backstory**

The story of DACC is one of, not just change or improvement, but transformation. This is not to suggest that the shelter is now perfect, its current save rate of 60% remains lower than the other shelters in this group and indeed, than many other shelters in the state. However, the change from its former 3% save rate in only 2 years is impressive. As noted, DACC is Detroit's municipal shelter. Up until late December of 2015, the organization was called Detroit Animal Control (DAC) illustrating its emphasis and cultural orientation. Its primary purpose was animal control with its location in the police department signaling the stress on public safety, getting stray animals off the streets, and serving as a recipient of "found" and owner-relinquished animals. There are two other, nonprofit shelters in the city; the Michigan Humane Society and the Michigan Anti-Cruelty Society. Animals arriving at the former DAC could be released only to MHS for potential adoption; all animals deemed adoptable were eligible for transfer. However, given the 3% save rate, it is clear that very few animals (almost always dogs) made the all-important journey from DAC to MHS. Pit bull mixes were defined as "not adoptable" and were automatically euthanized if an owner did not recover them during the 4-day hold period. But, as noted at the outset of the book, the case of Ace made clear that these holds did not always take place. Extensive media attention was given to the high rates of euthanasia at DAC, administrative problems, unwillingness to allow the public inside the shelter and to cooperate with local

rescues, along with charges of outright animal cruelty (<https://www.clickondetroit.com/news/alleged-animal-abuse-at-detroit-animal-control>; <http://www.fox2detroit.com/news/local-news/detroit-animal-control-responds-to-animal-abuse-allegations>).

In late December 2015, DAC was moved into the health department which had a new director. A new director for the shelter was hired and the old one moved to care for the mounted police officer's horses (a controversial move given the nature of the cruelty charges at DAC under his watch). At the time the new director took over there was no operating budget, standard operating procedures, staff training, preventative medical care or first aid, and basic animal care tools (beds, bedding, toys, food dishes, slip leads, treats, and so on). Many dogs were kept in group pens; when the inevitable fights broke out injured animals were euthanized rather than treated. There were no volunteers, no cooperation with rescue groups, no transfers, and no enrichment. Many kennels had wire doors so dense and in areas so dark that animals were not visible. The cat room was in an area of the building without heat. Rodents and bugs infested the building. Arrival at DAC ensured that life would be unpleasant and death a certainty.

The sea change brought in with the new director is clearly visible in the shelter's save rates. But, getting there involved a host of other improvements, made manifest in the change of name from DAC to DACC. In short, the new administration put the "care" in animal control. As part of the health department the new role of DACC emphasized both public health (prevention of bites and disease, licensing of dogs, catching stray and feral dogs) and the welfare of animals. The first volunteers were trained and in the shelter by the end of January 2016 engaging in activities including kennel cleaning, shelter organization, medication rounds, organization of donations, preparation of enrichment items, exercising dogs in outside kennels, distributing treats, and cleaning the grounds. A local rescue provided training to dogs on the "struggle bus." The use of catch poles to remove animals from cages for cleaning was replaced with slip leads. A new veterinarian treated injured animals, provided pain relief and other medications, and began to provide basic vaccinations and flea and parasite treatments upon intake. Cats were moved to a different area of the shelter with heat and newer cages and were provided raised beds, bedding, and toys. And, animals began to leave the shelter on transfer to network partners across the state and even across state lines.

As noted, DACC moved into the old MHS building in the mid-fall of 2016 (Fig. 7.3). While the facility is almost the same



**Figure 7.3** “New” DACC building.

age as the prior building and has a lower capacity for dogs it represents a significant improvement in many ways. The cages in the old shelter were stacked brick boxes; the new shelter has a number of much larger kennels with two separate spaces divided by a guillotine door. While some areas of the new shelter have stacked kennels they are modern, larger and easier to clean. There are floor drains for waste. The building has relatively uniform heating and cooling, is free of pests (rodents remain an issue), has proper clinic facilities, improved ventilation, and better offices and working spaces. At the point that adoptions are regularly offered at the shelter, there is space for the public to interact with the animals. It also has a larger grass play area and better storage facilities. In short, while the new building is far from ideal it is a significant improvement.

### Interview: Melissa Miller, Director, September 8, 2017

Interviews at all of the most improved shelters started with the same open-ended question: What do you think has been most important in leading to the improvement in your animal outcomes? Respondents were then allowed, without further prompts, to identify those activities and changes they felt were

most critical. Additional questions and probes were introduced after this initial discussion.

In the interview conducted with Director Miller, she did not explicitly mention the fact that the leadership change that brought her in as Director was the catalyst for the transformation at DACC. However, it is clear from both direct observation by the author (as one of the first volunteers) and reports in the local traditional and social media that nothing would have improved the situation at the old DAC without a shift in leadership and culture. And, the choice of Miller as the new director was almost uniformly felt to be an excellent one increasing the odds that lasting change would occur and that the new DACC would be better embedded in and respected by the local animal welfare community. Miller has a long record of animal welfare work most notably with the HSUS running its disaster response teams and as the cofounder of Dog Aide in Detroit. Dog Aide began life as the organization called “Save Ace” and was founded as an advocacy group to press initially for Ace’s release from DAC and then for changes at DAC. After Ace was euthanized Save Ace expanded its mission and was renamed Dog Aide. It had a slightly different trajectory than many animal welfare groups in the city in that it began and remains an advocacy organization (Krcatovich and Reese, 2018). While Dog Aide continues to be an advocate for animal welfare it also engages in community education and outreach; provides food, medication, and other supplies to a number of families in their program (spay/neutering is required for client participation as is a commitment to keeping the dog or dogs inside the house); and cooperates with another nonprofit (Bark Nation) in providing free sterilization services to the citizens of Detroit using a mobile unit that operates in the parking lot of DACC, also sterilizing DACC dogs if it has openings or if the dogs are going to an adoption event. Thus, it was at the forefront of individuals and organizations calling for change at DAC and it worked largely behind the scenes with the city to create a plan for that change. Director Miller was a leader of these efforts and thus enjoyed the respect of the animal welfare community in the city. She also had the necessary credentials and experience to take over an organization that was in a state of disaster. Miller credited the impetus for change to the new director of the health department, Abdul El-Sayad who was instructed by Mayor Duggan to fix the problems at DAC that were causing demonstrations and other political issues in the community. Director Miller was a uniquely appropriate choice because of her background in cruelty and crisis response, was experienced with the need for

rapid response at times of stress, and in using triage to “stop the bleeding.” The shelter was clearly viewed as a crisis situation that needed an emergency response. It should also be noted that Miller brought with her two critical staff acting on a volunteer basis; both women were certified dog trainers and behaviorists and had extensive shelter and rescue experience. They initially acted as volunteer coordinators, helped found the Friends of DACC, assisted in establishing policies and procedures, trained staff in animal handling, and one (Kelly McLaughlin) became a certified euthanasia technician. She was soon hired as a consultant to work on policies and procedures ultimately becoming an Animal Control Officer (ACO) and assistant director. (McLaughlin became the acting Director of DACC in late October of 2017 upon the resignation of Director Miller. This is discussed more fully at the end of this section.)

In response to the open-ended question regarding what were the most important facilitators of their improvement Miller indicated that she began the job with five shelter priorities, presented in order of importance:

1. staff safety and training,
2. animal safety,
3. medical issues and prevention of contagion,
4. basic animal needs, and
5. comfort and enrichment.

The placement of training first in the order of disaster response initiatives highlights findings from previous analyses that suggested that numbers of staff and volunteers are not as critical as how they are trained. Thus, the first job was to ensure that all of the ACOs were appropriately certified (which was not uniformly the case). Proper equipment and training on how to use it was also one of the first priorities. Catch poles were being used to bring dogs into the shelter. Because the dogs were primarily in stacked brick and cement boxes they had to be removed and put in another cage while the original one was being cleaned. Again, half of the dogs were on the top of the stack, which was roughly chest high for many of the staff and volunteers. Under the old regime dogs were dragged out using catch poles and placed into another cage. Slip leads were purchased and all staff trained to use them; catch poles were then only used if it was absolutely necessary. The sight of the delight on the faces of several of the ACOs when they first received their slip leads was heartwarming; many of the staff were desperate for change. Over the course of the first 90 days of Miller’s term, all staff worked through the 5-day NACA certification class which was approved by the Michigan Department of

Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD). The purchase of new tools and a host of necessary items such as food bowls (prior to Miller food was just thrown on the floor of the small boxes that contained most of the dogs), medication, toys, and other supplies occurred early in her tenure. Initially DACC had no operating budget; operating funds were drawn from an open payroll position. Negotiation between Miller, El Sayad, and the city council led to an operating budget. In addition, the council also approved the creation of a nonprofit Friends of DACC. This group was able to accept donations of food and supplies and they began to pour in.

Addressing animal safety involved training on using the least invasive means of animal handling (i.e., slip leads rather than catch poles), but more importantly, it involved modifications of the building. Changes to the building involved a delicate balance because Miller knew, or sensed, they would be moving so major renovations would not be cost-effective. Politically, it was becoming clear that the city was planning to extend its system of river front parks. The old DACC site sat on part of this acreage and ultimately was razed to create that parkland in early 2017 (Fig. 7.4).



**Figure 7.4** Old DACC site.

Immediate measures were made to discontinue use of kennels that were too dark (much of the lighting did not work) or where the metal mesh was so dense that the animals could not see out (the vet used to make her rounds using a flashlight because it was impossible to tell if dogs were in some of the kennels, much less if they were having medical problems). Miller also ended the practice of group housing (the gang pen) whereby unrelated, untested dogs (both males and females) were placed in larger kennels together. Cleaning procedures and products were changed and unified. Because of a lack of supplies and an understanding of best practices for their use a variety of processes and substances were being used and mixed together. The building was state-of-the-art when it was constructed in 1920 and the stacks of boxes had a trough in the middle and an automatic watering system. However, this, long ago, had stopped working and hoses had to be used to clean kennels and floors that also had poor drainage. Keeping the shelter clean was a serious challenge and one of the first to be addressed. Different cleaning equipment was designated for specific areas to avoid the spread of disease from the isolation room to the rest of the population, for example. Staff were trained on the proper order for cleaning areas of the shelter, that is, from rooms for healthy dogs to the isolation areas for potentially ill ones. Staff had become inured to a culture of “scarcity thinking” whereby they were unable to plan for the future because there were not enough resources to be able to plan. Thus, they needed training on noticing and warning when supplies were about to run out so that more could be ordered. “Repetitive coaching” was required.

Because former DAC staff are unionized, city employees they stayed in the shelter with the new administration. Two years later many are still at DACC contributing to the transformed organization. DACC let some staff go and has had some additional positions approved by the city. Many of the newly hired staff were drawn from the ranks of the volunteers. This appears to have been a sound decision as such individuals had shown a commitment to the shelter and were familiar with conditions and expectations. Volunteers in the old shelter performed many typically “staff” functions such as cleaning and moving dogs and were exposed to many aspects of sheltering not commonly seen by volunteers in other shelters (such as procedures and equipment for sending samples to the state for rabies testing or deceased animals in the thawing process). Thus, the transitions from volunteer to staff were relatively smooth.

Improving veterinary practices and ensuring that proper palliative and preventive medical care was provided was another one of the critical first steps. Most of the medication at the old DAC was donated from other vets and had long expired. One of the initial volunteer tasks was to go through all of the medical supplies and dispose of anything out of date; and much of it was years out of date. Animals were not treated for pain and any medications, such as antibiotics for kennel cough, were given in the same dosage regardless of the nature of the animal; from Chihuahua to Mastiff, all doses were the same. The long-time veterinarian was let go, volunteer vets were taken on board, and new supplies were donated from surrounding veterinary hospitals. Ultimately, a full-time vet was hired and a complete range of medical services provided to all incoming animals: rabies vaccination, heartworm tests for dogs, and combo tests for cats flea treatments and prevention, wound care, and properly dosed antibiotics. All animals are scanned three times for the presence of a microchip (although the old DAC had scanners they were never used). Staff were also trained on how to recognize disease and pain to help reduce the potential for the spread of disease. Incoming animals were placed in a separate section of the shelter to observe for rabies and communicable diseases, such as parvovirus. Miller stated that these medical changes were required to “stop cruelty” in the shelter. During her first day at the shelter, a dog was injured in a fight in the gang pen (this practice, as noted, was immediately stopped). Staff assumed that she was taking the dog to be euthanized because injuries were never treated. They were amazed that it was going to the clinic to be treated. It was not that they approved of prior practices but they had never seen anything different. Hence these changes represented concrete steps toward a culture change.

This culture change among the staff had to take place before any programs or activities could be introduced. Similar to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, enrichment, and even live release were higher order goals that needed to wait till the more basic “thinking and doing patterns” changed among staff. Slow, deliberate, and thoughtful change needed to occur “at the speed of trust,” which became a catch phrase at DACC and is emblazoned on the rubber commitment bands purchased for staff and volunteers.

Standard operating procedures had to be created and staff had to be trained in their use. Because almost all animals were euthanized there were no procedures for behavior assessment. SAFER behavior testing was implemented to determine which

dogs could be released for transfer, and more immediately, which ones volunteers could handle. It is important to note that all initial DACC volunteers were required to have previous shelter or animal welfare experience and most were disaster response certified. This created a group of volunteers who were immediately ready to assist in animal handling and shelter cleaning.

The introduction of volunteers was a fraught process for the existing staff. Because of the extent of bad press and citizen protests (which sometimes spilled into the lobby of DAC) staff had reservations about volunteers, fearing that they would be hostile. Ironically, because of the extent of media coverage about conditions in the shelter, the new volunteers had the same fears of the staff. Both groups were surprised at how welcoming, non-judgmental, and gracious the others were and soon formed a solid #TeamDACC. The introduction of volunteers opened the ability to focus on comfort and enrichment; filling Kongs, preparing frozen treats, providing “drive by” treats, taking animals out to the small outdoor kennels, allowing cats to play outside their cages while they were being cleaned. Volunteers were also involved in traditional staff functions such as cleaning which including moving dogs from kennel to kennel.

After triage to protect the basic safety of staff and volunteers, the attention could turn to live release. Other licensed rescues and shelters had been anxiously waiting for the time when they could pull animals from DACC for adoption at their facilities or through their networks. The response from these organizations was vital to the shelter’s success. Initially transfer efforts focused on animals that had immediate medical emergencies. However, it became clear that this put significant pressure on rescue partners in the form of medical costs and the transfer program was expanded to include all animals that passed their SAFER tests. A staff member was put in charge of live release and the transfer program took off. For the first 8–10 months, transfer partners came out of the wood work to help. After the novelty wore off, the Live Release Coordinator focused on building a sustainable network of partners and standard procedures for transfer.

A significant challenge remains the fact that over 90% of the dogs in the shelter at any given time are pit bull mixes. Many transfer partners are unwilling to accept pit bulls on transfer because they have so many in their own populations and they tend to take longer to be adopted. Often multiple partners will be in the shelter at the same time “competing” over the limited pool of smaller and non-bully type dogs. Cats generally are transferred relatively quickly particularly since

the shelter stopped accepting feral cats that citizens have trapped. The recommendation is for such cats to be left in place since they are not good candidates for transfer although some of the transfer partners have “barn buddy” programs that accommodate feral cats.

Beyond these initial changes, DACC also had to change its culture of interactions with the community. This represents a higher-level change which could only be addressed once triage was completed. Community perceptions of DACC were negative in the extreme but to serve its role in improving public health and safety there were several specific perceptions that needed to be addressed. First, the community needed to be convinced that having an animal go to DACC was not a “death sentence.” In many cases, dog owners are required to bring their dogs in for bite quarantines. In the past there had been cases where owned dogs were euthanized during their bite quarantines. Thus, the new DACC needed to build trust, to demonstrate to owners that if their dog came for quarantine it would come out alive, and that if it was quarantined or arrived as a stray it would not become sick from being in the shelter. Owners were encouraged to visit their dogs and observe that they were getting proper care, had a kennel of an appropriate size, and had a bed and toys. A culture needed to be created both internally and externally that “we have your property and we had better take care of it.” Another issue of conflict was the seizure of animals. DAC and the police department had been relatively quick to seize owned dogs for running at large, not being vaccinated, or as a function of a drug bust or other type of arrest. As the result of a court case forbidding such practices, DACC has made clear that under the circumstances noted above, the animal (typically a dog) remains in the home and the owners are educated about licensing, vaccinations, sterilization, and proper containment and if the owner is being arrested a friend or family member is allowed to make arrangements to care for the animal. If repeated problems occur, a ticket is issued rather than seizing the animal. ACOs are making an increasing number of wellness checks to dogs that have been at risk, have been observed in poor condition or circumstances, or that have been left chained outside. The goal is to “meet the community where it is at” and keep more animals in their homes. Greater trust between DACC and rescue groups has led to more cooperation with the latter more likely to notify DACC of problems in the community, and willing to recommend that strays be brought to DACC over other possible shelter options. As a result, intake has increased at DACC and is taken as a sign of successful

community relations because residents have enough trust to bring in found animals, the new shelter location is more central, and division of labor between the three Detroit shelters means that most strays go to DACC. This allows residents looking for lost animals to only have to go to a single shelter; as a result, DACC does not typically accept relinquishments.

## Site Visit

To provide a description of DACC requires a discussion of the old shelter since the change in facility was part of their ability to improve save rates. As noted, the author was among the first set of volunteers allowed in to the old shelter, about a month after Miller took over and continues as a volunteer team leader in the new building. That first set of individuals was drawn from staff and volunteers at area shelters and rescues and those with FEMA certification for disaster response were given priority (a number of volunteers were members of the HSUS and Red Rover response programs). At the point of this writing, 2 years after beginning to volunteer, it is still possible to see, smell, and hear the old shelter. As Miller said, the old shelter was “assaulting” to volunteers. At night after a day of volunteering it was impossible to sleep; images of the animals and the shelter were deeply embedded and to describe it as disturbing would be an understatement. There are relatively few volunteers remaining that were in the old shelter and many did not make it past their first day of volunteering. It was simply too much to take; some walked “behind the red door” that led to the dog area from the lobby and simply turned right back around and left. These volunteers were encouraged to, and did take on, activities that did not involve being inside the shelter such as collecting donations or doing laundry (which, because of the volume and the lack of an industrial washer initially involved taking bedding and towels out to a laundromat). At one time a citizen was taken into the back to look for his lost dog. As he returned to the lobby he stated “wow, it just got real.” And, indeed, the old DAC building was real; animal sheltering at its worst.

The two largest dog holding areas (the Big and Little Ten), had stacked brick and cement “cages” with heavy metal doors. They were so small that it was difficult for dogs to turn around in them. No type of bed could have fit inside. A trough (or the Hep C River as it was sometimes called) ran between the levels and originally running water automatically flowed down those to carry away waste. The aisles were narrow so that all dogs

could see another dog. Dogs had to be moved from one box to another for cleaning which meant sliding the second story dogs out, lifting them, and then placing them on the floor or lifting them into another box. After Miller's team took over a slip lead was placed on the dog and then it was lifted out, prior to then it was done with a catch pole. Cages were cleaned by scraping solid waste out with a squeegee, hosing it down, scrubbing with a brush and paint scrapers, spraying cleaner, and hosing it down again. All dogs had to be removed from both the upper and lower cages on a side to make this cleaning process viable and so that debris and waste did not fall from the top cages into the bottom ones. Just cleaning the shelter once a day was a heroic feat.

There were several auxiliary rooms with mobile kennels that were used for isolation and small dogs. There was a room with larger kennels used for isolation of larger dogs and then a large room (sometimes called the take-out room) which had very large kennels. These were used as "gang pens" under the old administration but were quickly changed to house very large dogs, bonded pairs that came in together, or litters of puppies. The cat room had originally been in an unheated, dark, and damp room at the back of the shelter, but was quickly moved up front in a room with a window and proper heat and ventilation. Movable kennels large enough to allow for crates for elevation and beds were placed there. There were several small fenced runs behind the shelter which were used in good weather to allow the dogs some play time particularly while their cages were being cleaned.

Lighting was very poor, some areas were quite hot while others were cold, there was black mold on the ceilings, many ceiling tiles were missing (into which escaped feral cats sometimes ventured), roaches and rats were prevalent. Given the state of the HVAC system there was no possibility of creating separate ventilation systems for different areas. There was a lobby area for the public to purchase dog licenses and meet up with ACOs for a walk through the shelter if they were missing a dog. If a resident found his/her dog it had to be licensed before it left, which typically meant a rabies shot was required. This was done in the lobby.

The new shelter infrastructure is considerably better. There is a large and very warm (heating and cooling is still quite uneven) cat room with double-sided kennels. A separate visitation room has cat perches and toys and cats can play in there while their kennels are being cleaned. The bulk of the dog kennels are two sided, meaning dogs no longer have to be

removed for cleaning. Floor drains work reasonably well to facilitate cleaning. The kennels are sufficiently large to accommodate Kuranda beds which have been donated. However, because the new building has a lower capacity, there are often dogs on both sides of the guillotine doors reducing the size of the kennels and adding stress. The intake, isolation, and puppy/small dog rooms still have movable stacked kennels. They are bigger and more easily cleaned than in the old facility but capacity remains an important issue. While the ventilation system is still substandard the isolation areas are well away from the general population making it easier to limit the spread of disease. Still minor infections such as kennel cough remain common.

There is a large grassy play yard next to the parking lot which has recently been subdivided into separate play areas, one of which now has agility equipment. Dogs cannot be walked off the property due to liability issues, but most of the population is taken to the play yard, particularly during cleaning. Additional volunteer orientations are being conducted to increase the number of volunteers so that more dogs can go out daily. All of the cleaning is done by trained staff with the exception of the cat room which is sometimes done by volunteers.

There are several clinic spaces, staff offices, and a larger lobby and desk area to interact with the public. Walking residents through the shelter to find lost animals is a far less traumatic experience and is facilitated by a detailed kennel inventory, often including photos. The latter also assists other shelters and rescues in determining which animals they want to pull. The new facility is brighter, cleaner, and a bit less loud. But, to be sure, it remains far from state of the art.

## **Genesee County Animal Control**

The Genesee County animal control function operates as a free-standing county department funded by a dedicated millage. The Genesee County Animal Control advertises itself as a “no kill shelter.” It provides animal control services and an open intake shelter to the county which is also the location of two other licensed nonprofit humane societies (limited admission) including Adopt-A-Pet Fenton which is profiled in the “best” shelter chapter and consistently has one of the highest save rates in the state; Adopt-A-Pet pulls animals from the Genesee County shelter. The shelter calculates and advertises a “live outcome percentage” which includes all those animals still within the shelter at a given time point. The most current (January

through August 2017) monthly statistics range from 89.78% to 95.14%, higher than the official MDARD save rates would indicate. Structurally, Genesee County Animal Control reports directly to the County Commission. The task of animal control is broader than operating the shelter. ACOs are actively engaged in health and welfare checks to be sure that dogs are not being chained improperly and have adequate food and shelter. Most of the ACO time is spent on this activity. They will only seize a dog after a warning and if the situation is not rectified. As in Detroit, the goal is to keep the animal in its home and work with the community.

### Interview: Renea Kennedy, Deputy Director, October 27, 2017

Like DACC, Genesee County Animal Control received a new leadership team in 2015 which brought a “total change in theory and practice.” This change was stimulated by high euthanasia rates and poor practices that resulted in media attention and public demonstrations to change the County Board of Commissioners and the administration at GCAC and to support a dedicated millage to fund its operation. These protests were so virulent that at one point dead dogs were left lying in the shelter parking lot (apparently, they were picked up off highways). The millage was established 6 months prior to the hiring of the new leadership team. When asked the open-ended question about what things were most important to their improvement Director Kennedy indicated:

1. new leadership,
2. standardization of operation procedures and consistent application of procedures,
3. increased staff size and enhanced staff training,
4. extended veterinary hours to improve medical care, and
5. patience.

The change in leadership was a critical first step in taking the other actions necessary to improve outcomes at the shelter. The new standard operating procedures covered areas across the board: temperament testing, adoption, cleaning, volunteers, fostering, feeding, owner surrender, post-op walking procedures, communication policies, transfer agreements, foster agreements, intake procedures, and so on. Change in temperament testing for dogs was particularly important as it had been done before the dogs had an opportunity to decompress in the shelter and in the presence of other dogs (i.e., beyond the ones

being tested). This created an environment that did not enhance the chances of success or give a fair sense of what the dogs were really like.

Staffing has increased as has the number of volunteers, and all were trained on processes, particularly animal handling, so that everyone is working with the animals in the same way. Everything is predictable for both the animals and humans.

Adoption processes were not being consistently applied. Now, there are no exceptions to policy. There are free and required dog interactions as part of the process, there are no exceptions to the mandatory sterilization process—no contracts to sterilize later are provided unless there is a medical need,

Although they still have only a part-time veterinarian, her hours were extended. Prior to the new administration, no vaccinations were provided on intake. Now all recommended vaccinations are provided and all animals are sterilized, dogs are treated for heartworm, and while there are currently no public vet services, they have a rabies shot clinic every February and citizens can get up to date on their licenses at low cost and with no fines. They have instituted a “no live birth” policy which is an issue over which shelters and rescues differ sharply. The rationale is that there are far too many animals already and veterinarians at shelters with this policy, view the mothers as their primary patients, particularly if other issues are involved, such as heartworm.

As with DACC, trust and patience were noted as critical first steps in making necessary changes at the shelter. The need for patience was framed as primarily an internal challenge in this case, between staff and volunteers; many of the former are new while many of the latter have been in the shelter for a longer period and were part of the fight for change. Kennedy noted that the leadership has to be consistent with people and with policy so a relationship of trust can be developed and maintained. “Everyone needs compassion and an understanding that no one is here to hurt animals.” There was a “love/hate” relationship between staff and volunteers when the new leadership came on board. Volunteers viewed staff as not doing their jobs, hating animals, and getting pleasure out of killing them (a view of staff also held by incoming volunteers at DACC). However, staff were being ordered to participate in euthanasia and were trying to keep their jobs and “feed their families.” It took a long time to rebuild the bridges and trust between the two groups. Again, this is very much the story of DACC.

Kennedy describes the first 8 months as being “brutal” with everyone needing to learn patience. The addition of a full-time

volunteer coordinator and intake of new volunteers has helped the transition. The relationship of trust also includes the community which was very active in promoting change at the shelter. They are trying to build strong ties between the shelter, staff, citizens, and their network of partners. Kennedy strongly feels that if it were not for the community there would have been no millage or leadership change.

Current challenges focus most intensely on euthanasia decisions whereby dogs too unpredictable or potentially dangerous cannot be adopted to the public. There are times when volunteers do not agree with the assessments. To promote trust, different staff members test the dogs at different times and other staff watch the tests. A closed Facebook page is specifically devoted to open discussions between staff and volunteers about euthanasia decisions. A culture of open dialog is being created where volunteers are welcome to ask questions and staff make clear their thinking. In many other, even high performing, shelters such as HSHV, volunteers are allowed to ask questions but are discouraged from discussing or further questioning staff thinking. At GCAC volunteers who have worked with a particular animal being euthanized are invited to visit beforehand so they can say goodbye, “animal welfare is about human compassion as well as animal compassion.”

Although not mentioned as one of the top five changes in practice leading to success, Kennedy also noted that networks are very important. Like DACC, they transfer dogs out of the shelter because, as an open admission animal control, they are always at capacity. They maintain a list of approved transfer partners as well as a “do not use” list and collect detailed information on potential partners. Additionally, close ties with the Michigan Pet Fund Alliance have been very helpful in making connections to other groups such as All About Animals which brings their mobile unit and performs spay/neuters in the parking lot every week to assist with the shelter animals; they get about 20–40 procedures completed in a day.

The discussion about outcome improvements also led to a larger conversation about the meaning of “success.” The numbers reported to MDARD on the annual shelter activity reports are not really save rates. Kennedy argues that they actually represent the number of animals taken in. Thus, if an animal arrives deceased it is supposed to get a number and be listed as an intake and included on the report for MDARD. How shelters actually handle these numbers is likely to vary as with returns. Kennedy feels that live outcome is a better measure of success, meaning that at the end of a reporting year or month, the

number of animals alive and residing in the shelter should be counted as a successful outcome. They keep these statistics for grant applications and are also the numbers reported on their website. Other indicators of success which would be more comprehensive include: humane care; adoption rate (theirs was 51% at the time of the interview); transfer rate; and return to owner rate. Indeed, the shelter keeps different sets of books to report to different agencies; primarily what is needed for the annual MDARD report but also the data required (basic animal data matrix) by Maddie's Fund for grant applications.

The issue of breed labels for dogs was also discussed since the absence of breeds appears to be one of the most significant correlates of lower kill rates. Genesee uses breed labels and will continue to do so as Directory Kennedy is strongly opposed to their removal. While the motivation to use labels in some shelters such as HSHV is the desire to anticipate problems with apartments that prohibit certain "breeds" such as pit bulls, Kennedy's reasoning is more philosophical. She strongly feels that pit bulls should be labeled proudly and openly and then the task is to change people's attitudes about that label through education. "You don't change the name, you change the definition." There is no breed bias in the shelter or in the country she indicates. "To change cultures about a breed you need to call it a pit bull or a pit mix and change how people identify with the language."

## Site Visit

While much was said in the interview about the poor quality of the shelter facility and plans for renovation, it looked reasonably good in comparison to both the old and new DACC facilities; at 45 years it is newer as well (Fig. 7.5). There are significant heating and cooling problems with unevenness in service throughout the building and there is no system for handling air from different areas separately. They also have stacked dog kennels with wire mesh bottoms (the DACC cages have metal bottoms so are superior in that respect), but they are larger than at DACC and dogs can more easily move around. However, there is insufficient room for beds and no toys were visible during the tour. Some dogs had blankets and some did not, likely based on their propensity to chew them. There are six larger kennels (one sided) for bigger dogs. A separate room with smaller kennels houses small dogs.

All of the areas were clean and amazingly quiet. Director Kennedy indicated that this was the result of their volunteers



**Figure 7.5** Genesee County Animal Shelter.

who did a good job of getting all of the dogs outside for walks and play time in the fenced in yards including one with agility equipment. A number of volunteers were present, walking dogs in a cold rain. Because of the stacked kennels volunteers would need to lift dogs out of the upper kennels. No dogs were observed with collars and volunteers were walking them on slip leads. Dogs undergoing heartworm treatment were marked so that volunteers knew the nature of activity they were allowed to have depending on where they were in the process. There is a system of clips on cages to indicate which dogs are behaviorally ready to be walked by volunteers. The cats are housed in double-sided cages and also get time in a separate room for play. There are a few cat cages in the vehicle bay/garage which can be rather cold. These are for cats undergoing flea treatment so that they do not spread it to the other cats; they are moved to regular kennels after treatment with Capstar so their stay in the bay is quite short. A separate isolation room holds dogs upon intake that have not yet had their medical check and shots.

There are separate kennel areas for dogs on bailiff holds either due to bite quarantines or because they are involved in court cases. This area is kept locked although specially trained

volunteers are allowed to walk them and some go to foster with trained volunteers depending on the nature of their holds. There is a small clinic with one surgical suite for the part-time vet who serves only the shelter animals. They have a large room for behavior testing and staff meetings and training. It was noted earlier that MDARD shelter inspections tend to focus on just a few aspects of shelter condition, perhaps because they are easy to assess. The 2017 round of inspections appeared to be focusing on whether or not shelter ceilings (in areas that contained animals) were able to be cleaned and sterilized. This creates an obvious issue for older (and even newer) shelters with dropped ceilings since changing all the ceilings would be cost prohibitive. Genesee, despite its age, passed the MDARD inspection because it has ceilings which can be cleaned.

A renovation is scheduled for March 2018 which will significantly improve conditions for dogs creating an enlarged space that will have two-sided kennels. It will also provide areas to hold classes for the public and improve HVAC and air handling systems.

The lobby is relatively large and the near -term plan is to start selling merchandise like T-shirts and other items with the shelter logo on them. Implementation is waiting for staff to be trained on how to handle the money since such activities are new. Unlike at DACC, the public is allowed to walk through the shelter to look for animals for potential adoption. (Subsequent to the interviews and site visits the Friends of DACC were holding monthly adoption events at the shelter with potential adopters allowed to walk down several aisles of kennels containing dogs available at the event. The public is supervised by volunteers at all times.) There are no staff or volunteers assigned to supervise them, however, and a woman was observed putting her whole arm in the kennel to pet a dog (there are holders for water buckets, but they were not being used so this leaves a very large space in the kennel screen for people to reach in). Director Kennedy explained to the person why this was not a good idea while leading the tour. Cages have cards with information on the animals and also any behavioral issues they are working on. There is a separate room for animal visitation which contains a couch to simulate a “real life” effect.

## **Harbor Humane Society**

The Harbor Humane Society is a nonprofit that serves as the animal control and shelter entity for Ottawa County under

contract. As such, it is an open intake shelter for any animals from within the county borders. While they have a 5-year contract for animal control, budget allocations are based on a monthly assessment of the number of animals in the shelter and then resources allocated on a per capita basis. This system does not then account for necessary infrastructure that must be supported year-round and creates a system whereby revenues are increased in the summer (kitten season) and money must be returned to the county in the winter when numbers are down. This makes fiscal planning difficult and the contract does not account for fixed overhead costs. In total the contract pays for about 20% of their costs and the rest of their required revenue comes from donations. Structurally then, animal numbers must be reported to the county but the organization remains a nonprofit and thus is otherwise an independent nonprofit entity. They also receive revenue from surrenders although they may waive fees in some cases and would prefer to work to keep the animal in its home. There is also an off-site thrift store and all revenues go back to the shelter.

As is clear in the photo in [Fig. 7.6](#), the Harbor Humane facility is relatively new at 30 years. Just to the right of the building



**Figure 7.6** Harbor Humane Society.

they have begun construction for an addition which will increase the space for dog training and community humane education. Harbor Humane serves a very different community than either DACC or GCAC. The largest cities in Ottawa County are Holland and Grand Haven; both are tourist destinations because of their location on Lake Michigan. Other parts of the county are quite rural and include a number of agricultural facilities including growing flowers (tulips for Holland) and wineries. These conditions present different challenges in animal control and sheltering.

### Interview: Jen Self-Aulgur, Director, October 9, 2017

As with the two previous shelters, Harbor had a leadership change a year before the interview. Director Self-Aulgur indicated that changes leading to lower kill rates had already begun to be implemented before she got there. However, they had a reputation for warehousing animals because of an unwillingness to euthanize under any circumstances. She feels that some animals are so sick or dangerous that euthanization is necessary; in particular she is unwilling to release dangerous animals into the community or to rescue groups; that is, she does not want to be passing their problems along. Indeed, an examination of the shelters' outcome data as analyzed by the Michigan Pet Fund Alliance indicates that the save rate declined just a bit after Self-Aulgur took over. Save rate in this case is defined as all those animals "not dead" which means they are alive and could be sitting in the shelter. Based on the move away from warehousing it makes sense that this number would go down as suffering and unsafe animals are euthanized. And, although she indicated that positive changes were already underway prior to her taking the job, the previous director left "under a cloud of issues" and many of the kennel staff left at the same time. This allowed her to bring in her own staff (many of whom she had worked with before) which facilitated the leadership change and allowed for a greater impact on the shelter culture. When asked what factors most contributed to their improved outcomes she listed the following:

1. changes in adoption procedures,
2. changes in how stray and feral cats are treated,
3. increased foster care and volunteer participation,
4. quality of staffing, and
5. willingness to try new things.

The shelter has changed to an “open adoption” process meaning that they moved to “same day adoptions” and stopped doing vet, reference, and land lord checks. This had led to their adoption rate going up 104% in the first year.

While the shelter serves as the county facility for bite quarantines and bailiff holds, they do not employ ACOs; that function remains with county law enforcement. ACOs had a practice of catching or trapping stray and feral cats and bringing them to the shelter increasing the number of unadoptable animals. They have been encouraging ACOs to leave stray and feral cats in the field, have created a large feral cat colony on-site, and are working with local agricultural and winery concerns to adopt feral cats for rodent control. The feral colony is part of eight acres the shelter owns that back up to a blueberry farm. There is a large shed and additional shelters in the field. They also offer free spay/neuter to residents with feral cats and encourage them to keep them in their original location.

Foster care has increased substantially, particularly for kittens. A new volunteer coordinator oversees the program and has also increased the volunteer ranks to between 150 and 200 active volunteers. Volunteers engage in a number of hands-on, activities including dog walking, cat comforting, adoption counseling, and off-site trips with dogs; they are planning to train particular volunteers in dog training techniques so that they can work with dogs that have more challenging behaviors.

Being able to have the right people in the right staff positions has been critical. The hiring of a dedicated volunteer/foster coordinator has improved enrichment and save rates. A position was converted to development and they have a staff member for animal behavior. They have also cross-trained many (but not all) staff so that there is greater flexibility in staff activities. Self-Aulgur noted that they have applications from many younger individuals looking for summer or part time employment. Harbor Humane then became an alternative employer to Target and the local coffee shop. Such staff tend to have higher rates of turnover and are not as reliable due to low pay rates and are not part of the cross-training efforts and primarily clean kennels and engage in basic animal care. Higher level staff have been trained to administer vaccines, are certified euthanasia technicians, and some do basic medical procedures (such as blood draws). They have occasionally hired volunteers as staff (indeed, the volunteer coordinator is a former volunteer), but she indicates that there are disadvantages to that as they sometimes become disillusioned when they learn what goes on behind the scenes in a shelter beyond simply walking dogs or petting cats. This is a very

different situation than was described at DACC where volunteers were exposed to the day to day realities of shelter.

Finally, the leadership at the shelter is constantly studying evolving best practices and is willing to try new things. For example, the change in adoption procedures was in direct reaction to emerging professional recommendations based on studies that found that red tape can be reduced to increase adoptions and lower the number of people going to breeders without an increase in returns. Dog play groups were instituted after an on-site training session from Dogs Playing for Life based on experiences at other shelters.

Beyond these five most important changes, Self-Aulgur also noted that better relations with the community have had an important contribution to their success. They are making efforts to have residents view the shelter as a community center. This is the impetus for the construction of an addition to the building which will allow them to hold humane education and animal training classes for the community. She pointed to discussions within the animal welfare community about general trends in reductions of shelter intake numbers. “If intakes keep going down due to spay/neuter activities, what will shelters be doing?” She is looking to humane education, more training on behavior and proper pet care, and bringing more people in to the shelter to look at animals. This emphasizes that animal welfare is “a community problem.” Overall their community support is improving.

Because Harbor Humane is a nonprofit they are also able to and do accept animals from outside the county. Thus, intake is drawn from the following sources (in order of magnitude): strays from Ottawa County; relinquishments from the county; transfers from Van Buren County (a neighboring county with which they have a long term cooperative relationship); and transfers from other shelters in Michigan (they are a DACC transfer partner) and two “sister shelters” in Tennessee and Mississippi. The latter relationships allow the shelter to offer puppies to the public. They had participated in the PetSmart Rescue Wagon program and were very disappointed when that was discontinued. The sister shelter relationship allows for stability and trust to be built into the new transfer relationships. The sister shelters transport the animals to Michigan, administer two parvo shots, and quarantine the puppies so that parvo is not brought to Harbor Humane. Only two litters have had parvo in recent memory, which is much lower than other shelters with southern transfer programs (see the discussion of HSHV in [Chapter 8](#), There Are Many Ways to be the Best:

Profiles of the Most Improved Shelters). Puppies received from the transport program are isolated for 48 hours and special staff are designated to care for them thus ensuring that they are not spreading any potential disease to the rest of the population. They would prefer to isolate the puppies for at least 2 weeks but it is a revenue “balancing game” because the longer the puppies stay in the shelter the less the profit and the opportunity to use that revenue to subsidize the care of other longer-term animals is lost.

Self-Aulgur feels that there are a number of benefits to the transfer program; it provides puppies for local families and thus increases adoption revenue but it also increases adoptions of adult animals. She suggests a dynamic where potential adopters come to the shelter thinking they want a puppy, are reminded of all the work involved, start thinking about an adult dog, and then select one from the shelter. This argument has been proposed by other shelter directors with transfer programs although the data are not available to assess how frequently this happens. Based on experience with HSHV’s Love Train, it is clear that visits to the shelter increase when the puppies hit the adoption floor. Harbor Humane is also willing to transfer pit bull mixes from Michigan shelters such as DACC which is relatively uncommon. There are few pit bull mixes in the population at Harbor Humane indicating a potential difference in the population of dogs in the larger community although Self-Aulgur indicates that she believes they are out there, just not in the shelter. When such dogs are placed on Pet Finder they are listed as mixed breed with no other breed label (although the pit bull mixes are the only dogs listed as mixed so it is quite easy to identify which ones are perceived to be pit bulls).

As with most of the other interviews, the Director was asked to describe her sense of what would be proper or better indicators for animal shelter “success.” She believes that kill or save rates were misleading because they can be calculated in so many different ways and instead noted the following:

- Length of stay because it so strongly affects the mental and behavioral health of the animals.
- How well the shelter works with the community. Do they help other shelters? How well do they bridge the divide between shelters and rescues? What is the quality of public education to change the “dog catcher” image and to provide humane education for kids?
- Do they operate at capacity? While it is not desirable to operate beyond the capacity to provide humane care, consistently operating under capacity suggests that there are

animals out there whose needs are not being met or that there are community needs not being met. This also relates to the definition of “community.” If there is a shelter in need they will make every attempt to increase their ability to transfer animals, again always ensuring that conditions are humane. The use of foster homes allows them to expand their capacity to assist considerably.

## Site Visit

The outdoor setting is large and wooded allowing for space for walking dogs and there are two large play yards with a gate in-between so that they can be subdivided for play groups; Dogs Playing for Life has been at the shelter and they now run play groups.

The inside of the shelter is relatively small and crowded. At 11:00 am the cat cages had not been cleaned (leading to an almost irresistible urge to begin cleaning them). Upper respiratory infections are common among the cats and one needing isolation was observed during the walk-through. The lobby area is relatively small and filled with cats in various types of cages to allow for increased capacity and for the public to see them (in one case a large bird cage had been converted to a cat condo). This lends a lot of visual interest to the lobby but has caused the shelter to run afoul of MDARD during its most recent inspection because the cats are too close to the human work stations. They are now required to move all the lobby cats into regular cages in the back for the evenings. They were also written up for having dropped ceilings that could not be cleaned and disinfected; ceilings that had passed inspections for years. The only ceiling that can be sterilized in the shelter is the one in the surgical suite. Since replacing all the ceilings is not economically viable, it is unclear how Harbor Humane and other shelters in the state are going to address this. All of the animals have beds, hiding places (cats), toys, and blankets.

The dog kennels have two sides, but they had dogs on both sides making the kennels quite a bit smaller for the dogs. Adoptable cats are in larger kennels with two sides but the cages in intake are much smaller. There is one communal cat room and also a communal space in the lobby. They have several “real life rooms” where animals that are perfect pairs are housed. Indeed, two such adult dogs that had arrived from their partner shelter in Tennessee were being “married” later in the day as a fund-raising event (of course without mentioning that they were mother and son).

## Capital Area Humane Society

CAHS is different from the other three most improved shelters in that it is a nonprofit without a county contract. Thus, it is limited intake and is not tied geographically to a particular service area although it tends to serve communities that surround the state capital of Lansing. There are animal controls in both Clinton (the locations of CAHS) and Ingham Counties (the location of Lansing and proximate to the shelter). These two animal controls have relatively poor or moderate 2016 save rates; 26.78% and 76.84%, respectively. CAHS has the newest facility among the most improved shelters and is currently about to enter phase two of an ambitious renovation project (Fig. 7.7).

Because it does not hold a municipal contract all funding for the shelter comes from donations, fund raising events, and grants. They have an active grants program that funds everything from humane support for the community to special medical funds for major surgeries. The fact that CAHS is not tied to a county contract means that they can define their service area in a way that meets their own definitions of need. Thus, they were



**Figure 7.7** Capital Area Humane Society.

an early, and are now a regular transfer partner for DACC. Early on the CEO made a visit to the old DACC shelter and was “appalled at what she saw.” She realized they needed help and CAHS has been doing so ever since. They are also willing to pull pit bulls from DACC because of the great need even though they have many in their own population. They also transfer dogs from the Michigan Anti-Cruelty Society in Detroit. They participated in the PetSmart Rescue Wagon and then received a grant to start their own transfer program. In addition to pulling dogs from DACC they bring puppies up from southern shelters. Unlike Harbor Humane they have experienced parvo with these puppies but they are isolated in the shelter for 5 days so there is less risk of exposure to the population or that they will get sick after they have been adopted. Older dogs from the south remain in isolation until they are sterilized which also helps ensure that parvo does not spread. Most with parvo are treated successfully. They noted that the dogs coming from Detroit are uniformly healthy, good behaviorally (dogs from DACC receive a full SAFER test although medical and behavioral tests are redone at CAHS on all dogs coming in regardless of prior tests), and are easy to work with.

### Interview: Holly Lawrence, Director of Operations, September 12, 2017

This is the only shelter among the four most improved that has not had a leadership change during the period under study, over which save rates have improved considerably. Indeed, they have had a stable leadership team for the past 9 years. There have, however, been some changes in the next tier of management. It was noted that higher level staff keep abreast of the changing best practice recommendations from other shelters and professional associations and that top management is very open to experimentation and change. The executive director is very good at “envisioning what can be” and thus, even with stable leadership, practices are constantly changing and being improved. Director Lawrence was asked the same open-ended question as the other “most improved” shelters’ directors. She pointed to the following factors:

1. change in adoption procedures,
2. increased foster care,
3. change in procedures for behavior testing of dogs,
4. expanded enrichment, and
5. willingness to try new things.

The leadership at the CAHS has been following the changing research and recommendations about streamlining adoption procedures. So, as at Harbor Humane, they have reduced red tape considerably; there are no land lord or vet checks, and there are no restrictions on adopting pit bulls (such as requiring fenced yards or no children). All of the breed labels have been removed from dogs and all dogs are listed as mixed on pet finder (unless they clearly appear to be a pure-bred dog). Kennel cards also do not identify breeds. Lawrence noted that occasionally potential adopters will ask about the breed of a particular dog and are basically told that “what they see is what they get.” Their return rates run between 5% and 7% on average and they have seen no increase with the relaxed adoption processes. Indeed, most of the returns are puppies when adopters just did not realize how much work they would be.

They have greatly expanded their foster program, particularly during the summer and into the fall to accommodate kitten season. At those times they have more animals in foster than they do in the shelter. They have also implemented a foster ambassador program whereby foster parents are responsible for getting their own animals adopted. The animals are promoted on the CAHS site but fosters also promote them, arrange visitations, and approve the adopters. She reports that fosters like the program because they get greater control over the adoptions and can get to know the adopters. They have 150–200 active fosters and 1277 animals go through foster in a year which is comparable to the other similarly sized and high performing shelter, HSHV profiled in the next chapter. In addition to their foster program they have gotten a grant to support owners that want to surrender their animals or individuals who have found an animal. If at all possible they try to keep the animals out of the shelter (i.e., shelter diversion) and have them stay in their current homes while awaiting adoption. While the shelter does not put such animals on the website due to liability issues they provide support for training, low cost spay/neuter, and publicity.

A variety of changes have been made in their behavior testing and training areas. They have two dog behavior staff who keep up with professional recommendations for behavioral testing. Dogs are now assessed for dog reactivity and aggression through the use of play groups (Dogs Playing for Life visited the shelter to provide the staff training). Dogs are now eligible for adoption if they have resource guarding issues. The behavior staff assess the dogs, establish treatment plans, put notes in their files, and all information is given to adopters. Policies

regarding cat adoptions have also changed in that those with Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) are now eligible for adoption as are those that are fearful and that have litter box issues. Kittens testing positive for FeLV are sent to foster to see if they can shed the disease. (They are not currently adopting kittens and cats with FeLV but are studying the issue and may do so in the future.) It should be noted that this means that all cats and kittens are combo tested upon arrival. They frequently find that cat behavior issues go away once the cats are in homes. They received a grant to supply adopters with supplies that are designed to increase the likelihood of using the litterbox such as attracting litter and feloway diffusers. This grant also pays for behavioral help and classes to keep animals in their homes whether they were adopted from CAHS or not.

Enrichment has expanded significantly and includes many activities currently considered to be best practice: individualized behavior plans for all dogs that need them; all dogs are using puzzle feeders; play groups; a variety of enrichment activities (frozen Kongs, busy boxes, ice popsicles in water buckets), mat training; cats have diffusers and sound machines; indoor and outdoor enrichment time; and clicker training whereby specially trained volunteers work with the “staff only” dogs.

Finally, as noted at Harbor Humane, there is a willingness to try new things which allows the shelter to implement current best practices and pilot test new ideas. For example, the shelter veterinarians were initially opposed to the adoption of FIV positive cats. The executive director had attended a professional conference which featured research showing relatively normal lifespans, that such cats get adopted at rates similar to other cats, and that FIV positive and negative cats could safely live together in the same household. They decided to try it for a time and see how it went and it is now a regular part of their practice. Thus, management is willing to seek out best practices and are willing to try them. Prior to the current leadership standard practice was to euthanize every animal that was sick, there was no treatment for upper respiratory infections, heartworm, or parvo. Cats with FIV were euthanized. Director Lawrence indicates that at the time “they could not see what could be and how to afford it.” The shelter had also been open admission which stressed capacity and affected practices. There have been great changes in animal sheltering best practice and what sheltering means has changed tremendously and CAHS has changed as well.

In addition to these most important changes they have also improved relationships with the community. The community is

extremely supportive of the shelter and wants to do the right things for their animals when given the proper tools. With the change to limited intake they moved to a wait list for relinquishment. While people are on the wait list they work with them on the issues they are having. She indicated that most people accept the wait list because they understand that the limitations ensure that animals are not euthanized which means their former pet will not be either. Some people, however, are unwilling to wait and just let the animal loose or drop it off at the shelter tied up outside the building. One man walked into the lobby and left a box full of kittens. This sort of abandonment appears relatively common at shelters in the state and has resulted in the installation of gates at shelter entrances and use of video cameras in the parking lots and lobby areas at several shelters. CAHS has good cooperative relationships with most other area shelters and assists local animal controls in Eaton and Clinton counties by transferring animals and housing cruelty cases. Relationships have not been as good with Ingham County. Director Lawrence suggested there was a sense of competition between the shelters with Ingham being protective of strays within its service area. Recently, even this relationship has been improving with some dogs being transferred to CAHS from Ingham. She indicated that they all need to “figure out how to pool services, efforts, and resources so that more can be done.” To that end the directors of all the area shelters meet regularly.

### Site Visit

The shelter has recently completed phase one of a two-phase renovation. The first phase added significant space for the lobby, adoption meetings, holding facilities, isolation units, office space, and clinic areas. Although CAHS has the newest building, size limitations served as a barrier to expanding their efforts to meet the needs of area animals. The expanded holding and intake areas allows them to bring in more animals and the larger isolation areas, completely separate from the rest of the shelter, will assist in limiting the spread of disease. These areas also have their own separate outdoor runs so that dogs can exercise without risking cross-contamination. The cat areas have also been upgraded and expanded and almost all cats are in communal rooms, one with controlled outdoor access. The expanded clinic with a separate entrance will allow the shelter to provide euthanasia services to the public. Phase 2 of the renovations will focus on the adoptable dog area which is

relatively small. The kennels are two-sided but the dogs do not have an outdoor option and puppies are in a separate room with stacked kennels. They are currently visiting other newer shelters (like HSHV) to see what aspects of their renovations they like and what ones they wish they could change.

## **The Path to Success Depends on Where You Begin**

It is clear that DACC and GCAC started in a much poorer state than the other two most improved shelters; conditions at DACC were particularly dire. Comparing the lists of the most important activities leading to success it is also clear that coming from a different place meant that these two shelters had to address a different and much more basic set of problems; true transformational change was required. [Figs. 7.8 and 7.9](#) present word clouds for the most critical changes made at DACC and GCAC. Leadership is prominent in both as are the rest of the very basic changes that were made.

No improvements would have occurred in either shelter without leadership change at the top of the organization. The new directors and leadership teams had extensive animal welfare experience in either other shelters or with national and local animal welfare nonprofits and they came into their jobs with strong and important connections to networks of other shelters and rescues and with knowledge of current best practices. They were fully qualified to undertake the tasks at hand and, in the case of Director Miller, uniquely positioned in terms of the community and disaster response to be successful.

Neither shelter had standard operating procedures for any tasks from cleaning to enrichment. Basic animal and humane safety were the first needs that had to be addressed. Both directors understood that patience and time would be required for the shelter to move forward; from staff, volunteers, and the community. “At the speed of trust” was a realistic statement about the long history of animosity and protest that led to change at both shelters and the rebuilding of that trust would be a slow process that had to be founded on concrete changes in practice and outcomes. As with Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs, the shelters had to progress from the physiological needs for food and water, to safety, and then to the “enriched” needs of love, esteem and self-actualization. DACC and GCAC needed first to ensure that animals were being fed and cared for properly. Appropriate medical care needed to be provided and



**Figure 7.8** Word Cloud of Change at DACC.



**Figure 7.9** Word Cloud of Change at GCAC.

actions taken to prevent the spread of disease. Human and non-human animal safety had to be ensured through proper cleaning procedures, animal handling, and behavior testing. All of these needs had to be met before the shelters could move on to the transfer of animals, the use of volunteers (although GCAC always had volunteers, DACC did not), animal enrichment, and community relations. The types of changes made at Harbor Humane and CAHS were luxuries that the other two shelters could only hope to implement in the future: foster care, a robust and open adoption process, expanded animal enrichment. And a willingness to experiment at DACC and GCAC meant instituting professional best practices at their most basic level. The nature of the DACC shelter facility, staff culture, an inability to conduct adoptions, and the absence of an operating budget meant that the task was truly one of complete transformation rather than improvement. But, the lesson from DACC in particular is that any shelter, no matter how challenged, can improve their outcomes. The outcomes may still not be optimal and the continuing challenges great, but with a committed and professional leadership change can occur. And, it can occur at open intake, public shelters with resource constraints and capacity challenges. It can occur in horrible facilities and in a toxic community-relations environment.

Harbor Humane and CAHSs were already performing at a reasonably high level at the beginning to the study period. Consequently, the magnitude of their improvements are less and the types of activities they undertook to improve are very different. While one of these shelters had a leadership change, improvements there were already underway; CAHS has had stable leadership for a number of years. Thus, a complete leadership change appears not to be required in shelters that have a good record of performance. In these cases, a willingness to keep up with changing best practices and experiment accordingly is sufficient. And, the types of changes both shelters made are strikingly similar (see [Figs. 7.10 and 7.11](#)). Adoption processes were streamlined in both cases to facilitate and encourage adoptions and to try to keep the public from going to breeders or pet stores. Breed labels have been removed from the dogs; completely at CAHS and at least for pit mixes at Harbor. Expanding foster programs was critical for increasing capacity and addressing behavioral and medical issues that might in the past have led to euthanasia. How animals are tested, treated, and trained was changed to allow more to be successful and adoptable. Volunteers were used for hands-on activities and enrichment for both dogs and cats. Both shelters



were able to pay for training by Dogs Playing for Life and have implemented play groups both for behavior testing and to improve the shelter experience and reduce stress. This is a relatively expensive proposition that many shelters like DACC and GCAC could not possibly afford. Thus, a certain baseline of success and resources may be required to be able to move the shelter on to the higher level of the needs hierarchy. It should also be noted that CAHS and Harbor have strong networks of shelter partners from which they operate on the “helping” end in that they take transfers from struggling shelters. Both were early and are consistent transfer partners for DACC. They also meet community desires for puppies by assisting struggling shelters in the south. Thus, their sense of mission extends beyond the animals in their shelters or in their communities.

## Shelter Improvement Check Lists

Check-lists of recommended activities based on the survey findings have been presented in previous chapters. There is great variability in the challenges of different shelters and thus the activities they need to undertake to enhance outcomes differ. This has been clearly demonstrated by the four shelters profiled in this chapter. Thus, two lists are presented; one for shelters that are facing severe challenges and must undertake a complete transformation the other for shelters that are well on the road to improving outcomes and want to take the next steps to move ahead.

### Check List for Total Transformation

- ✓ Install new leadership and leadership team.
- ✓ Implement best practice standard operating procedures for staff and animal safety.
  - Use recommended cleaning products and order of cleaning.
  - Employ standardized animal handling procedures and for moving of animals from kennels.
  - Create isolation areas for sick and new animals.
  - Properly certify animal care officers.
  - Certify euthanasia technicians.
  - Ensure that kennels have proper light and ventilation.
  - Procure and train on proper equipment.
- ✓ Implement best practices for medical care.
  - Conduct medical assessments upon intake.
  - Provide basic vaccinations and parasite preventatives.

- Test for heartworm and FIV/FelV combo test.
- Provide appropriate dosages of pain medication and antibiotics.
- Provide wound care.
- ✓ Begin basic enrichment.
  - Provide beds, blankets, and toys.
  - Create enrichment activities such as frozen Kongs, Nyla bones, busy boxes.
  - Allow for outdoor exposure and exercise.
- ✓ Begin building a transfer network.
- ✓ Begin a volunteer program.
- ✓ Implement standard procedures for behavior testing and adoption.
- ✓ Exercise patience, make change “at the speed of trust.”

### Check List for Continued Improvement

- ✓ Facilitate adoptions by cutting red tape.
- ✓ Remove breed labels.
- ✓ Expand conceptions of what constitutes a “pass” on behavior tests.
- ✓ Test dog reactivity and aggression in play groups, move beyond barrier testing.
- ✓ Expand concepts of what animals are adoptable based on behavior and medical status.
- ✓ Keep abreast of changing professional standards and recommendations.
- ✓ Be willing to experiment and innovate.
- ✓ Improve community ties through support, humane education, partnerships.
- ✓ Expand partnerships with other shelters and rescues.
- ✓ If transferring from other shelters, particularly the south, have proper isolation periods and facilities.
- ✓ Expand use of volunteers.
  - For foster programs.
  - Provide specialized training for higher level activities.
  - Use volunteers for hands-on animal handling and enrichment activities.

### Reference

Krcatovich, E. M. S., & Reese, L. A. (2018). Everyone loves a dog story. *Social Problems*, 65, 416–437.

## THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO BE THE BEST: PROFILES OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SHELTERS

The four shelters responding to the survey with the consistently highest average save rates between 2012 and 2016 are the Humane Society of Huron Valley (HSHV), Adopt-A-Pet Fenton, Roscommon Animal Control (RCAC), and the Capital Area Humane Society (CAHS). Thus, CAHS is both one of the most improved and consistently best shelters in the state. These shelters are quite different from each other. Two are nonprofit, limited intake shelters, but they differ widely in size, budget, and intake. HSHV is a nonprofit with a county contract so is a large open intake shelter. RCAC is a relatively small county animal control with open intake. All of the shelters but RCAC accept animals on transfer from in-state shelters with capacity or resource issues (all pull animals from Detroit Animal Care and Control [DACC] for example) and from southern shelters to acquire puppies. HSHV has the largest budget and an extremely large staff allowing for a 3/1 animal to staff ratio. HSHV and RCAC are operating out of new facilities. HSHV has a large veterinary clinic that serves both the shelter animals and the public; Adopt-A-Pet provides low cost spay/neuter and vaccination clinics but otherwise does not regularly serve the public. Thus it is clear that there is no single type of shelter or level of resources that serves as a recipe for success; shelters of all types can have extremely good outcomes (Table 8.1).

The communities that these shelters serve or where they are located are also quite different. Washtenaw and Genesee counties have large denser populations. However, the former is clearly more prosperous with a growing population, the highest housing values and median incomes, and the lowest percentage of the population in poverty. As the location of the University of Michigan, it has by far the highest levels of educational

**Table 8.1 Nature of the Most Successful Shelters**

|                          | <b>HSHV</b>                    | <b>Adopt-A-Pet</b>            | <b>RCAC</b>           | <b>CAHS</b>     |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Organizational structure | Nonprofit with county contract | Nonprofit                     | County animal control | Nonprofit       |
| Intake status            | Open                           | Limited                       | Open                  | Limited         |
| Service area             | Washtenaw county               | No service area               | Roscommon county      | No service area |
| Transfer policy          | In                             | In                            | Occasionally out      | In              |
| 2016 Animal intake       | 5183                           | 1019                          | 430                   | 4257            |
| 2012 Save rate (%)       | 84                             | 99                            | 100                   | 69              |
| 2016 Save rate (%)       | 95                             | 99                            | 100                   | 93              |
| Revenue                  | \$6,652,848                    | \$300,000                     | \$396,053             | \$2,151,981     |
| Age of facility          | 7                              | 80                            | 7                     | 20              |
| Age of organization      | 120                            | 40                            | 70                    | 80              |
| Staff size               | 100                            | 11                            | 10                    | 12              |
| Capacity                 | 330                            | 80                            | 120                   | 244             |
| Capacity/staff           | 3                              | 7                             | 12                    | 20              |
| Veterinary clinic        | Internal and public            | Internal and low-cost clinics | Internal only         | Internal only   |

attainment. These locational attributes help explain the budget at HSHV where the county contract is supplemented (and outpaced) by donations, fund raising, clinic revenues, and merchandise sales. It should be remembered, however, that CAHS, while located in the more rural Clinton County, also serves the more urban Ingham County which is home to the state capital and Michigan State University. Thus, GCAC is the outlier serving a more rural area with the highest poverty and lowest median income and education levels among the best performing shelters (Table 8.2).

The analyses in previous chapters have indicated that the organization of the shelter (municipal versus nonprofit) and nature of the intake (open versus limited) have little to do with outcomes. The fact that a variety of organizational, intake, resources, and capacity attributes are represented among the four shelters with the consistently highest save rates supports these findings. The discussion of the case studies will be organized by shelter structure and intake policy so that these relationships can be explored in more depth. The HSHV and the RCAC shelter are similar in that they are the open intake shelter for a county area, responsible for sheltering, animal control,

**Table 8.2 Nature of Service Area**

|                                | <b>Washtenaw<br/>County</b> | <b>Genesee<br/>County</b> | <b>Roscommon<br/>County</b> | <b>Clinton<br/>County<sup>a</sup></b> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Population 2016                | 364,709                     | 408,615                   | 23,700                      | 39,233                                |
| Population change 10—16        | 5.7%                        | —4.0%                     | —3.1%                       | 00%                                   |
| % White                        | 74                          | 75                        | 96                          | 97                                    |
| % African American             | 13                          | 21                        | 0.60                        | 2                                     |
| % Hispanic                     | 5                           | 3                         | 1.7                         | 1                                     |
| % Foreign born                 | 12                          | 2                         | 1.5                         | 2                                     |
| # Households                   | 138,067                     | 165,268                   | 11,344                      | 14,796                                |
| # Housing units                | 149,948                     | 190,970                   | 24,342                      | 18,974                                |
| Median value-owner<br>occupied | \$208,200                   | \$88,500                  | \$92,400                    | \$117,400                             |
| % Bachelors or more            | 53                          | 19                        | 14                          | 17                                    |
| Median household income        | \$61,003                    | \$42,327                  | \$35,959                    | \$45,078                              |
| % In poverty                   | 14                          | 21                        | 18                          | 16                                    |
| Persons per square mile        | 488                         | 669                       | 47                          | 44                                    |
| Land area square miles         | 706                         | 637                       | 520                         | 888                                   |

<sup>a</sup>The Capital Area Humane Society is located in Clinton County, but primarily serves the Lansing/Ingham County area.

and cruelty services. They differ however in the nature of their service areas, staff and monetary resources, funding model, and in both capacity and intake levels.

## Humane Society of Huron Valley

The HSHV has consistently won the annual award from the Michigan Pet Fund Alliance for the best large, open intake shelter in the state. It is widely considered to be the best by other shelters and rescues that tour its facilities, mirror its programs, and long for its resources, staffing, and volunteers. Its new facility was built after an ambitious capital fund campaign and replaced a building that was small and antiquated. Previously adoptions and staff offices were in a separate small building on site, dog kennels were single-sided and difficult to clean, dog noise spread throughout the shelter, and there was a single communal cat room and another with stacked cages. Proper isolation procedures were not possible. The transformation with the new shelter was nothing short of miraculous for both the human and nonhuman animal occupants.

HSHV provides all county, animal services including cruelty and rescue, cruelty investigations, bite and bailiff holds, and accepts strays and relinquishments from the county. It also accepts farm animals from the county service area and regularly has horses, goats, and chickens on its adoption page; chickens are often kept on-site while the other farm animals are housed at cooperating farms. It conducts wildlife rescue and transfers them to rehabilitators and other partnering wildlife facilities. Its humane education, animal behavior support, and camps for children are supported by donations. It also opened a Cat Café off-site that allows the public to interact with cats while they relax or study, and offers special events such as yoga with cats. The cats in the café are adoptable and rotate in from the main shelter facility.

It should be noted that relations between the county and the shelter have not always been smooth, as some county commissioners have questioned the cost of the contracts with HSHV and the extent of the services provided. Some commissioners argued that the contract should be bid out to other organizations feeling that a lower level of services could be provided at a lower cost. Although there is disagreement on the minimum level of services required by the state, some commissioners have said that they should be limited to only the holding of stray dogs for a 4-day period. This would imply that no services would be provided for cats and residents would be unable to relinquish their pets to the county shelter. The leadership at HSHV has been unwilling to consider providing that minimal level of service because it does not meet their interpretation of state law or the humane needs of the community. Currently the shelter has a 3-year contract ending in 2020, with county and municipal contributions ranging from \$800,000 in 2017 to \$845,000 in 2020 for services including animal control, cruelty rescue and investigation, and intake of animals from county residents ([www.ewashtenaw.org/government/boc/agenda/bd/year\\_2017/2017-07-12bd/animal-control](http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/boc/agenda/bd/year_2017/2017-07-12bd/animal-control)). The bulk of the shelter activities are funded by donations; roughly only 12% of the budget comes from the county contract.

### Interview: Krista Donohoo, Adoptions and Front of House Manager, November 2, 2017

The interview started with an open-ended question asking about the most important things the shelter does that have led

to its long term and consistent success. Manager Donohoo provided the following:

1. Not afraid to try new things
2. Community support
3. Staff and volunteers
4. Leadership
5. Good customer service
6. Willingness to provide extensive medical care
7. Enrichment

The leadership at HSHV has always been willing to “think outside the box” and try new things, even if they go against conventional wisdom. Thus, the shelter is often an early adopter of policies that then spread to other shelters. For example, they were one of the first shelters to offer adoptions for FIV-positive cats and now will adopt FeLV cats as well. Because it takes much longer for FeLV cats to be adopted (and some live their relatively short lives in the care of HSHV) the administrative officers house an FeLV colony. They no longer test for FIV embracing current medical wisdom that such cats can live normal lives in the company of other cats. HSHV experimented with “pajama parties” for pit bull mixes to give potential adopters wary of the “breed” an opportunity to take a dog home for 3 days on a trial basis. The majority of the dogs that go on a PJ party have been adopted as a result. Other shelters have requested information on this program. HSHV experimented with a prison training program for a short time, but discontinued it because the dogs had trouble adjusting once their stay in prison was completed. Even though this latter program was problematic, they were willing to try it.

HSHV has very strong community support, as evidenced by their high levels of donations and large number of volunteers. Through dog training classes, camps for children, adult humane education, days of service for community groups, the public clinic, and attendance at a variety of community events, HSHV ensures that it both brings the community inside the shelter and takes the shelter out into the community. Two, very large fund-raising events, Walk and Wag (a walking and running event for the public and their dogs that includes a variety of dog activities and vendors) and the Compassionate Feast (a formal vegetarian dinner and silent auction), are long-running and very visible activities that bring in a significant amount of revenue.

Part of the community support is developed by providing good customer service in the adoption process. HSHV has long offered same day adoptions and has reduced red tape. Vet

checks are done only when staff feel that something “fishy” might be going on. Again in the spirit of experimentation, they allow individuals under 21 years of age (the traditional cut point for adoptions) to adopt animals. If the minor is living at home, a parent must approve and the minor must show that they are employed indicating that they can be financially responsible for the pet. HSHV maintains a list of local properties where pit bulls are prohibited so that they steer potential adopters to dogs appropriate for their living arrangements. There are volunteer greeters in the front of the shelter to assist visitors as well as additional volunteers in the dog and cat areas to answer questions. Staff assist with visiting an animal and with dog interactions if desired (some dogs are required to have an interaction based on presumed breed or temperament, which is provided free; there is a small fee if potential adopters want an interaction with a dog without that requirement). Adoption counselors (which are both staff and volunteers) spend a good bit of time with adopters. These interactions promote a good “word-of-mouth” reputation about the shelter in the community and are believed to increase donations and volunteers.

HSHV has a very large staff supplemented by 700 volunteers (although there is significant variation in the extent to which they are active). Volunteer training is extensive, often involving different skill levels and additional training. For example, there are four levels of dog handling training (Paws 1–3 and Head Start) along with required service minimums to take additional training. Volunteers are used for a variety of hands-on animal activities ranging from cat comforting (there are two training levels for cats), to pack hiking, to walking holding and isolation dogs, to advanced dog training (Head Start), to trapping feral cats and monitoring colonies. Volunteers are also used to conduct the dog and cat training classes, do adoption counseling, and for some clinic activities such as post-operative monitoring. There is a group of 400 volunteers who provide foster care, some of which specialize in bottle-baby kittens and other medical issues; 1200 animals a year are in foster. This large and well-trained group of volunteers is able to take over many tasks from staff freeing them up for other activities, increasing the capacity of the shelter via foster, and providing a high level of animal training and enrichment that directly impacts the save rate.

Top leadership at the shelter has been relatively stable and works well as a team. However, there has been a good bit of turnover in area managers including dog behavior, volunteer coordinator, and humane education. Most of the staff are

cross-trained and management is active in animal care. They are visible in the shelter and pitch in walking dogs when necessary (dogs get four walks a day of at least twenty minutes each so some shifts are not fully staffed with volunteers). Donohoo indicates that the leadership is supportive of middle level managers (although the turnover in those ranks might call that into question).

Because of its large clinic and veterinary staff, HSHV has been willing and able to provide extensive medical services to the animals in its care. This includes basic vaccinations, sterilization, and heartworm treatment but may also include surgeries for muscle and joint problems, amputations, eye removals, and support for the FeLV cats. Where some shelters might opt or need to euthanize such animals, HSHV has the resources to treat them and will continue to do so as long as the animal is not suffering. The large foster care network also allows animals with medical issues to be in homes rather than at the shelter.

Finally, the animals at HSHV get extensive enrichment to maintain their mental and physical health. There are several communal rooms as well as the Cat Café for cats that like to socialize, cat condos for pairs of cats, toys, beds, treats, and visits from volunteers. The communal rooms have access to a fenced-in outdoor area. The dogs get four walks per day including trips to one of three large play yards—one with agility equipment, several mile pack hikes for groups of up to 10–12 dogs occur 2 days a week, play groups occur daily. Any dog that needs it has a behavior plan and can also be put into the more intensive Head Start training program. Volunteers are able to take dogs out of the shelter for day trips or home overnight. Enrichment toys and treats are provided at several points during the day. Again, the large staff and volunteer contingent allows for very high levels of enrichment.

HSHV generally transfers animals in to the shelter rather than out, but they have sent animals to breed specific rescues, particularly if the animal (typically a dog) is having problems in the shelter. The shelter participated in the PetSmart rescue wagon program and, when it ended, they purchased their own van and now bring in roughly 100 dogs (mostly puppies) a month from shelters in the south. There have been concerns raised that this large intake of young dogs makes it harder for the older animals, often pit bull mixes, to get adopted. The leadership of HSHV feels that the “Love Train” increases adopter traffic through the shelter with some initially interested in a puppy ending up with an adult dog. Further, providing the community with puppies keeps people from going to breeders or

pet stores and thus increases the level of animal welfare more broadly. And, the puppies brought from the south are being saved from euthanasia due to overpopulation there. There have been issues with parvo, however. The Love Train puppies are isolated for 24 hours and then offered for adoption. The shelter does not have the space or the staffing to isolate the puppies for a longer period of time; most of these dogs are adopted within 1–2 days of arrival. They are kept in a separate area of the shelter from the other adoptable dogs and adopters are provided with counseling and literature on the risks of parvo (indeed the likelihood of it since it has been so common on the Love Train). They are told what to watch for and to bring the puppy back to the shelter immediately where it will be treated at no cost. They are told neither to travel with the dog, nor to let it interact with any other dog for at least 2 weeks. HSHV veterinary staff have had special training in treating parvo and have a good record of success.

HSHV continues to use breed labels for the dogs, including pit mixes. They are concerned that with the high number of apartment and condo complexes in Washtenaw County, breed labels are necessary so that renters can distinguish which dogs will be allowed and which won't; hence, returns will be reduced because they are not forced to relinquish prohibited dogs. Return rates are running around 7% and are higher for dogs than for cats so this is an area of concern.

Manager Donohoo feels that save rates are a good measure of success but also pointed to keeping animals in their homes as another desirable outcome. They have started an intake intervention program whereby money has been set aside to assist citizens with sterilization, medical expenses, education, and training to address problem behaviors. They are now collecting data on the number of animals kept in their homes to assess the effectiveness of this new initiative.

## Site Visit

As noted, HSHV is a state of the art facility—at least as of when it was built 7 years ago (see [Fig. 8.1](#)). The facility has separate entrances for the main shelter, the clinic, and intake although visitors to the shelter and the clinic enter the same vestibule which means that there may be animals coming and going from the clinic at the same time that the public is bringing dogs for training classes, for dog interactions, or are taking animals home after adoption. There is ample office space for staff and a large education room that can be divided into two



**Figure 8.1** Humane Society of Huron Valley.

spaces. This area is used for dog training classes on the weekend, kids camp activities and events such as birthday parties, training of volunteers, training of dogs, and small dog play groups when it is too cold for outside activities. The large lobby area has booths for adoption counseling (the “Coney Island”) and a retail store that sells HSHV merchandise and pet supplies. Thus, new adopters can purchase all essential supplies before leaving the shelter if they wish. The lobby also includes one cat communal room and has space for stacked cages during kitten season or for birds or the occasional ferrets, rats, reptiles, or mink. The lobby leads to a number of cat condos which can hold multiple cats, pairs, or single cats that need a lot of space. Most of the cats housed in the condos are “blue dot” cats meaning that they have behaviors that require special handling and thus more highly trained volunteers. There are two large cat rooms with cats in two-sided cages and two large communal rooms with outdoor access. Typically, one of those rooms is reserved for the barn cat program where less social cats are available for adoption into barns; these cats are taken care of by staff. There is a separate kitchen, food storage room, and volunteer room for the cat areas.

The dog area is separated from the cats by a door and sound proofing—there is no dog noise in any of the cat areas. There are two rows of dog kennels (24 in total) that have inside and outside access. There are only two kennels where the dogs have sight lines to each other. Blankets or temporary walls have been

used in some cases if the dogs in those two kennels react to each other. These are the largest kennels on each side and thus the larger dogs need to go into them regardless of their reactivity. In no other cases can dogs see each other and they are removed for walks from the outside so they are not walking in front of each other to leave for walks. Additionally, there are three visitation rooms that sometimes house dogs that are not doing well in their kennels. There is a kitchen, food storage, and grooming and supply rooms and a volunteer station for the dog walkers. Three outdoor play yards, one with agility equipment, allow dogs to play and there is an additional small, fenced yard for the public to interact with potential pets. Another small pen is used to house chickens, ducks, goats or other farm animals until another off-site location can be found (chickens typically stay at the shelter and are adopted from there, during cold weather they are moved into the garage). There are separate wings of kennels for holding (dogs on a stray hold or bite quarantine) and isolation. The intake area also has a few kennels where dogs and cats stay briefly before they move to isolation or holding. Each of these areas has separate air handling systems and volunteers do not move between them to minimize the potential for disease transmission. The public does not have access to any of the spaces other than the adoption floor, although they can see the outside of the holding area and occasionally adoptable dogs are placed there if they need a more quiet space. All of the kennels have automatic water bowls and dogs are closed in the in-or-outdoor space when the other side is being cleaned so there is no need to move dogs for cleaning.

The facility is located on wooded land leased from the University of Michigan botanical gardens. There is a large fenced space behind the shelter to walk dogs and also a trail outside and in front of the shelter. Volunteers with sufficient hours can walk dogs off site where there is a dog friendly nature preserve. Trails in back have been paved to address issues of icing in the winter. While pet-friendly salt is used on the pavement, it still gets in the dog's paws creating an issue that needs to be addressed (e.g., having a mastiff lay down and refuse to move on a walk is problematic).

The clinic facilities are extensive. It has a large surgical suite and separate veterinarians and staff to serve the shelter animals and the public; fosters also bring their animals in for medical treatment. There are a number of consultation rooms and areas with cages for recuperating animals.

It is useful to note that even the best facilities can have small flaws in functionality that are not noticed until they have been

used for a bit. Donohoo pointed to the fact that the kennels have single round drains and that it is sometimes difficult to get waste down the drain when cleaning. If gutters ran in front of the kennels everything could be scraped into the gutter with a squeegee and then hosed out and a cover replaced. Another issue is that one bank of the adoptable dog kennels opens to a berm in the back. Since dogs are removed from the outdoor sides of kennels for their walks, the berm means that there is a relatively narrow sidewalk area and that the dogs must be walked in front of other kennels ramping up all dogs involved and risking a bite if the dog redirects on the walker. Again, even new shelters supported by a high level of resources can have some unexpected issues and because what is “state-of-the-art” is constantly changing, it is unreasonable to expect any shelter to be “perfect.”

## Roscommon County Animal Control

The RCAC shelter is, as previously noted, smaller with a commensurately smaller staff and resources. The facility is the same age as HSHV and it also represents state of the art in terms of shelter facilities (Fig. 8.2). RCAC serves the county area



**Figure 8.2** Roscommon County Animal Shelter.

but is funded by a dedicated millage and the Director does not report to any other county department. The area it serves is largely rural although it also has a tourist industry because of its proximity to the City of Houghton Lake.

### Interview: Director Terry MacKillop, October 27, 2017

Director MacKillop has been running the county animal control and the shelter since 1989 when he started as a volunteer. In the beginning he was the only staff and the shelter was operating out of a shed. They raised money to add on to that building, but then the passage of the millage allowed them to build the current building; they supplement the millage with donations, bequests, and fund-raising efforts. The millage and independence from county oversight allow MacKillop to run animal control and the shelter as a personal fiefdom.

The shelter does not transfer animals in from the south or from other stressed shelters such as DACC because he views their animals to be “damaged.” They do not participate in transfer programs from the south because of high levels of disease, fleas, and other health issues as the animals change climates. They do assist shelters in surrounding counties if they have an emergency. RCAC transfers some animals out of the shelter to other licensed shelters (as opposed to rescues). Although the shelter itself has few network connections, Director MacKillop is well-connected to professional organizations in the state and region and appeared to know many of the other shelter directors in the state, whom he referred to as “girls.”

Director MacKillop indicated that the most important factors in the shelter’s success were hands-on care for the animals and outreach to the community and other licensed shelters. They have good relationships with area schools where they offer humane education and classrooms adopt the shelter to collect donations. High school students participate in activities in the shelter although they do not handle animals. They have conducted a door to door dog census in the county to increase licensing. A number of tickets were written; the county waived them all because they did not want to deal with all the appeals. MacKillop also notes that the shelter is successful because he hires good people (some of whom were volunteers prior to the suspension of the volunteer program). The shelter is a leader in return to owners and he has established a multi-county lost and found page, regularly checking back with owners who have lost

pets to see if they have been found. He also indicated that a large part of the shelter's success is that he is open to new information and willing to act on it.

Few animals go to foster homes, and if they need fostering, it is primarily done by staff. Most animals in foster are there for medical reasons or for hospice. MacKillop indicated that he does not like foster programs because the animals belong to the shelter and are a legal liability in the community. Further, he indicated that some of his fosters turned into "hoarders" as the result of fostering for a variety of organizations. The shelter does not use volunteers for any activities other than fund raising and light cleaning or emergency care when a hording case comes in. He said that in his experience volunteers do not follow directions, disregard the rules, and that they were experiencing an increasing number of bites because they do not listen to instructions. He also said that they had to euthanize dogs because volunteers did not follow rules and "use their heads." As a result of the lack of volunteers and the small staff, dogs get outside twice a day for about fifteen minutes each. Director MacKillop indicated that they had a staff person who conducts behavior assessments and works with dogs that have behavioral challenges.

While the shelter offers open intake for the county they do not accept stray cats because of the lack of clarity in both what the state defines as "stray" and in the holding times required for cats. Because guidelines are not clear, he feels it is a liability to accept stray cats so does not allow them to enter the shelter. He requests that the finders of stray cats keep them in their homes for 10 days and then they can relinquish them as the "owner." The shelter also does not accept dogs on bite holds, again requiring that owners keep them at home or at a vet's office. If owners are not willing to do that, he makes clear to them that the dog will be euthanized if it comes to the shelter. If a citizen brings in an animal that is injured or ill, the shelter will accept it.

When asked about ways to measure success instead of, or in addition to, save rates MacKillop indicated that optimal indicators of success would include: working with the public, public support, providing services to meet community needs and absorbing the animals that are out there. MacKillop noted that elected officials, lack of clear state legislation, and the tendency of rescue organizations to step over the line into the business of licensed shelters are significant barriers to shelter success. More specifically, he suggested that DACC "can be a good shelter if the city would allow it...the City of Detroit is like its own country" and that MDARD is unwilling to enforce any regulations on them.

## Site Visit

While all of the shelters in this chapter were exceptionally clean with little to no odor, Roscommon was the only one where it appeared safe to eat off the floor. The infrastructure in terms of air handling to limit the spread of disease is exceptional (Fig. 8.3). The kennel areas are perhaps not as desirable as at HSHV. Dogs have sight lines to each other; although the kennels are two-sided, they do not include outside access. Perhaps because of this the dog area is very noisy. Cats are housed in stacked kennels with two-sides and these are completely taken apart daily for sterilization even if the same cat is staying in the same kennel. There is a large communal cat room. There is a large outdoor agility yard for the dogs which is also used for dog interactions with potential adopters. All of the animals have raised beds, but no visible blankets or toys, and the cats do not have places to hide. There is a large, very clean, and well-organized garage with dated food which is donated to other shelters. There is a small retail area in the lobby. In some respects, then, the physical aspects of the shelter surpass the animal-care activities.

The most striking thing about the shelter was the lack of animals and activity by either staff or the public. There was a dog



**Figure 8.3** RCAC air handling system.

interaction going on during the site visit, but otherwise there were no members of the public in the shelter. There appeared to be only 10 cats and 5 dogs in the adoptable area and about another eight in holding. For a shelter with a capacity for 120 animals, the roughly two dozen animals in residence left a lot of slack resources. When asked about the lack of animals, MacKillop indicated that their intake was down and that they rarely reach capacity.

There is a small surgical room where they perform spay/neuters for the public once a month and run low-cost vaccination clinics several times a year. These are provided by area vets; any euthanasias are also performed by volunteer vets since ACOs do not want to do them. The shelter does not appear to need its own vet, even a part-time one, due to its low number of animals. Finally, there is a large pole barn behind the shelter filled with animal crates of differing sizes. They use the area when they assist other shelters with hording or puppy mill situations.

## Capital Area Humane Society

The interview with CAHS was detailed in [Chapter 7, At the Speed of Trust: Profiles of the Most Improved Shelters](#). It was the only shelter in the state that was both among the most improved and consistently best over the period of the study. The previous discussion will not be reproduced here, but several additional observations can be made regarding similarities in practice between CAHS and HSHV. Although they differ in terms of organization (one with and the other without a county contract) and the nature of intake—HSHV is open and CAHS limited—their practices and description of activities that lead to success are very similar. Both shelters have had stable leadership that keeps up with professional standards and is willing to experiment and constantly try to improve practice. Although CAHS has a much smaller staff than HSHV, the hands-on use of volunteers and a robust foster program ensure that animals are provided with extensive enrichment and shelter breaks for both medical and behavioral reasons. Both shelters have reached out to their communities and as a result, have healthy records of donations, to the extent that one built a new shelter while the other is doing extensive renovations. Both transfer animals from southern shelters and also from stressed in-state shelters such as DACC (CAHS pulls many more animals from DACC including pit bulls; HSHV will not accept transfer of pit bulls because of high numbers from their own service area).

CAHS also isolates the southern puppies for 5 days, making the transmission of disease less likely than at HSHV. Both shelters have streamlined adoption processes that make it easy for the community to adopt, provide extensive medical care, and have broad definitions of what “adoptable” means. Both shelters have changed dog behavior testing to include play groups as a way of assessing reactivity and dog aggression. Resource guarding is something that is treated as opposed to making a dog ineligible for adoption. Dogs with issues have behavior treatment plans and highly trained volunteers assist in working with such dogs.

CAHS has shown itself to be more willing to experiment in some areas, however. It no longer uses breed labels and indicates that this has not created a problem with local landlords; their return rate appears slightly lower than at HSHV. They are more active in in-state transfer programs which means that more adult dogs are arriving at CAHS from other shelters to balance the influx of puppies. They have implemented a foster ambassador program which HSHV has been considering, but has not yet implemented. CAHS has been focusing on intake intervention for a longer period of time which is supported by external grants.

The dog areas of CAHS are not as up-to-date as those at HSHV, but completely overhauling them is slated for the next phase of renovation. Volunteer training is a bit less structured at CAHS; dog walkers receive no special training and after the initial orientation volunteers can either comfort cats or walk dogs. Dogs are clearly marked regarding which can be walked by volunteers and which are staff-only so this addresses the training concern to an extent. In short, the recipe for success at CAHS consists of the same attributes that have allowed it to improve its save rates and move into the group of “best” shelters in the state.

## **Adopt-A-Pet**

Like CAHS, Adopt-A-Pet is a nonprofit, limited intake shelter. However, it is much smaller with fewer staff and monetary resources and has a much lower capacity. It does not have a specific service area, but is in the same county as Genesee County Animal Control. AAP actively pulls animals from that shelter, as well as from DACC. Along with transfers of puppies from southern shelters, it is active in networking both in-and out-of-state. Indeed, part of their mission is to “reduce the

amount of animals killed daily in overcrowded shelters by providing programs to help.” Thus, its service area and mission are much broader than the county in which it is located. Although its capacity is much less than Roscommon, its intake rates are much higher illustrating its role and mission as a transfer partner.

### Interview: Director Jody Maddock, October 5, 2017

When asked about the activities that have led to their consistently high save rates, Maddock indicated the following:

1. Limited intake
2. Enrichment for mental well-being
3. Well-trained and committed volunteers
4. No time limits on adoption
5. Wonderful medical team
6. Excellent and well-trained staff
7. Amazing community

Director Maddock readily acknowledges that the fact that they can limit their intake to animals that they can pick and choose helps ensure that all of their animals are highly adoptable. They conduct behavior assessments on animals before agreeing to take them. She readily tells staff, volunteers, and the public that they should not be overly critical of the open intake shelters because they have a different role and very different challenges.

They “go above and beyond” to ensure that they are providing the enrichment and other training that animals (particularly dogs) need to be successful. Maddock indicated that they love trazadone (a drug used for anxiety) and have been using it for years if dogs need help. They also send dogs out to training facilities if they need more intensive work and have a “boot camp” that they work with and dogs can be adopted from there. The training does not always work, but they do so few euthanasias that it “really rocks the whole place” when one occurs. Since there are no time limits on the animals there are some (cats) that have been in the shelter for several years. One is so fearful that she will only come out for one volunteer. They have dog play groups and staff have attended Dogs Playing for Life demonstrations at other shelters. They have also used the larger kennels for co-housing of dogs that have met in play groups and enjoy being with each other.

Volunteers are used extensively for hands-on animal care including dog training, enrichment, medical interventions, and cleaning. They only have 11 staff members including the medical team so volunteers are an essential part of the success

of the organization. They have 60–70 active volunteers who engage in all shelter functions including cleaning so that staff can focus on training and enrichment.

Director Maddock points to the quality and dedication of both the medical team and other shelter staff. Staff are cross-trained so can do any task in the shelter including medical support, adoption counseling, training, and enrichment. Their supportive community includes long time donors as well as businesses that conduct fundraising events for the shelter.

AAP is an active transfer partner to shelters in need, particularly Genesee County Animal Control and also DACC. Maddock prefers to pull medical cases from the latter when they need help with particular dogs. They have great medical staff who serve only the animals in the shelter so can help other shelters out with the more intensive medical cases. Their community is also very supportive with special fund-raising efforts to pay for the medical needs of specific animals. They also transfer puppies from the south but make the rescue groups there hold the dogs to ensure that they do not show signs of parvo and administer two doses of vaccine before they are transported. The puppies are held in isolation at AAP for another week before they can be adopted. Even with these precautions they do occasionally have a parvo outbreak from the puppies, but have a 98% survival rate and are able to keep it from spreading because of the basement isolation area. Because their kennels are of varying sizes, they only have eight spaces for larger dogs. Thus, while she is willing to pull pit bulls from Genesee and DACC she is limited on the number of larger dogs she can house. She acknowledges that AAP does out of state transfers of puppies to meet local demand and hence to raise revenue to subsidize other dogs in the shelter and pay for the medical needs of dogs from Genesee and DACC.

They do have animals in foster care but not a large number; they have 40 fosters but not all are currently active. There are only about three to four large dog fosters available so there are not a lot of places to put their pit bull mixes or German Sheppards that tend not to kennel well. Most of their foster homes are used for kittens and they have many fosters willing to take puppies but not a lot of puppies available or that need to go to foster. They do send FeLV positive cats to foster, but these are currently all at the director's house.

The largest source of animals in the shelter is owner surrenders. They are behavior tested and then put on a waiting list. The behavior test is quite "loose" at that point because the animal is usually nervous and not at their best. Essentially, if they

do not try to bite her they pass. While they are waiting for space their photos and information are collected and provided to anyone looking for that type of pet. All medical care, such as sterilization and vaccinations, is done while the animal is on the wait list. After relinquishments, the most frequent sources of animals are transfers from local shelters, hoarding cases, and transfers from out-of-state shelters.

Although Director Maddock did not specifically mention willingness to adopt new practices as a source of their success, this came out very clearly in the interviews. They never used to do same-day adoptions and did the full round of vet and reference checks. They reduced red tape based on recommendations in the profession and research indicating that making adoptions easier did not harm the animals or increase returns. Instead of filling out forms they have an “adoption conversation” asking informally about what medications adopters use for heartworm and flea prevention to get a sense of how past and current animals are cared for. They do check apartments to be sure that animals or specific types of animal are allowed. Their return rate is very low at 5% and they count every return in that 5% even if an animal was adopted years before. They do both dog and cat introductions. Staff went to other shelters to watch dog play groups. Maddock has researched current recommendations on different dog temperament testing methods and they have developed their own methodology based on their experiences. They adopt cats with FIV and she is aware of the research indicating that positive and negative cats can safely live in the same household. She is considering not testing for FIV, but has not yet convinced her medical staff. They were one of the first groups in the area to do Trap Neuter and Return. Thus, keeping up with changing best practices and being willing to try them appears to be a hallmark of both the best and most improved shelters.

## Site Visit

Adopt-A-Pet is on eight wooded acres and is located in what used to be a fraternity house for General Motors Institute and Kettering University. Using a bequest, they bought the building and moved in 8 years ago and renovated it using donations to create a shelter. Prior to the purchase, AAP was located in a house in downtown Fenton and served only cats because the neighbors were concerned about barking dogs. The move has resulted in a quirky shelter with many rooms for various purposes. The farm house feel makes it very different from many shelters and they use all three floors of space. All areas of the

shelter have separate ventilation systems and all of them vent outside so there is no air recirculation. All of the dog kennels have heated and cooled floors although the kennels are a bit small and are one-sided. The puppy rooms have glass doors so that if an adult dog happened to get loose it could not get to the puppies. The kennels for moms and puppies have outside access.

There are several rooms in the basement for specific purposes. One serves as a bite quarantine area; they do not do bite holds for the county or the public so this area is only for their own dogs if an incident occurs. The basement also includes isolation and recovery rooms which again, have separate air handling and include televisions that were donated. They have found that recovery time is shorter if the animals have something to watch; the cats typically watch videos of birds or fish and the dogs watch other dogs doing agility.

They have a very large play yard and a separate agility yard and an extensive wooded area for walking dogs. The site includes a memorial garden and is just lovely (Figs. 8.4 and 8.5). There is a separate cement play yard for puppies so that it can be easily cleaned.



**Figure 8.4** Adopt-A-Pet.



**Figure 8.5** Memorial garden.

There are no cat cages in the shelter; all cats are in a communal room which has a screen door so they can look outside in the warmer months. Future plans include a greenhouse so that there would be year-round access to an outdoor-like space. There are ample things to climb on as well as hiding places. They do have one or two cages on hand in case any of the cats have behavioral issues or become stressed. Cats are also able to rotate into the office space for observation and there is usually a dog wandering loose in the lobby. Different dogs get to be in the lobby, but they need to be cat safe and good with people including children. Like the shelter in Roscommon, AAP is scrupulously clean without any animal odor.

## **The Different Paths to Success**

The shelters profiled in this chapter appear to have consistently high save rates for different reasons that have much to say about paths to success and what it means to be successful. HSHV and the CAHS are the most similar organizations as far as their path to success. They have had stable leadership that is open to new ideas and change policies accordingly, many

volunteers that engage in hands-on work with the animals, vibrant foster programs to save animals that need extra support and also to expand their capacity, and varied and high-quality enrichment programs.

There are some differences in practice, however. While they both have transport programs to bring puppies from the south, CAHS keeps them in isolation for a longer period of time. In the preceding analyses, this was one of the strongest correlates of lower kill rates. Capital Area has also removed breed labels from all of their dogs, another factor related to success based on the survey. The organizations are also different in their structure, funding, and intake. HSHV, because of the county contract, must operate as an open intake shelter for any animal from Washtenaw County. CAHS as a nonprofit without such a contract has more control over the types of animals they take. In a sense this makes the save rate at HSHV more impressive. It should be acknowledged, however, that HSHV brings very large numbers of puppies in biweekly; often as many as 60 at a time. This is a much higher volume than CAHS. Since all of these puppies are adopted quickly (while the shelter probably has data on death rates from parvo this information was not provided) the sheer volume can counterbalance euthanasia of other types of dogs, primarily adult pit bulls that have behavior issues often from being in the shelter for longer periods of time. From personal experience it is clear that HSHV is an excellent shelter, but the reality is that save rates can be affected by transfer programs such as their Love Train.

Adopt-A-Pet is a good example of a successful small shelter. Their high save rates are possible because of their leadership, volunteers, foster program, strong community support, and extensive enrichment activities. But, they are also made possible because the shelter can intake only those animals they are confident will be easily adopted. They do transfer modestly from the south and take medical cases from local municipal shelters with low resources. Still they are able to offer a level of services to their animals that larger shelters typically cannot and they can avoid taking hard to place dogs that might need to be euthanized for behavioral issues. Thus, while they share the same attributes as the other two successful shelters, they are also aided by their modest size and limited intake.

Roscommon County Animal Control is an outlier. They have an almost 100% save rate across a number of years even though they are an open intake shelter. They do not engage in many of the best practices visible at the other successful shelters. There are no volunteers and no foster program. Enrichment activity is

minimal. But, they typically refuse to admit animals that most open intake shelters would receive; stray cats and dogs that have been involved in a bite incident, for example. They also do not assist other shelters unless there is an emergency, such as a hoarding case and they do not at any time accept animals from stressed urban shelters such as DACC or GCAC. As a result of this cherry picking, their shelter is almost empty leaving slack resources that potentially do not meet the needs of either the local community or the larger animal welfare world. Under these conditions does the perfect save rate really indicate a successful animal shelter?

In summary, it can be posed that save rates alone may not be the best measure of “success.” A number of other possible indicators were enumerated at the beginning of [Chapter 6, Which Shelter Activities Are Associated With Positive Outcomes?](#) some of which were reiterated here. For example, the shelter directors suggested the following other measures of success:

- Good community relationships
- Strong public support
- Retention of animals in their homes/shelter diversion
- Meeting community service needs
- Meeting the needs of the larger welfare community

And, high save rates can be “manipulated” in a variety of ways: intaking large numbers of highly adoptable puppies, selecting only highly adoptable animals for intake, keeping the number of animals low, and refusing to accept animals that might have behavioral or medical issues such as strays or those that are coming from economically stressed shelters and communities. These issues, drawn from the case studies are in addition to the varying ways that save rates are calculated: how owner requested euthanasia is treated, whether returns are counted as additional intakes and then additional adoptions or “saves” (a practice at HSHV), whether or not animals currently in the shelter are counted as saved because they are alive. The indicators of success measured in this study are based on available data but it is clear that success means much more than these data would suggest.

## Check List for Consistently Positive Outcomes

With these caveats, there are practices common across at least three of the shelters profiled in this chapter. These are listed below. It should be noted that there is variation in the

quality and age of the shelter facilities, particularly regarding size of the dog kennels and their ability to access the outside. These do not appear to affect save rates. While some of the items on the check list do require a relatively high level of resources related to staffing and medical care, others can be done by any shelter at a relatively low cost: a willingness to embrace new techniques and practices, actively using volunteers to free up staff for other activities, and engaging with the public and being present in the community.

### Check List for Consistently High Save Rates

- ✓ Maintain stable leadership.
- ✓ Support leadership that keeps up with developments in the field and is willing to experiment with new practices.
- ✓ Create vibrant volunteer and foster programs.
- ✓ Have highly trained volunteers performing hands-on animal care.
- ✓ Enhance enrichment.
- ✓ Embrace a willingness to provide extensive medical care.
- ✓ Maintain good customer and community relations.
- ✓ Promote a well-trained and committed staff.

## THE MANY PATHS TO SUCCESS: IT'S A JOURNEY NOT A DESTINATION

The forgoing chapters have provided a detailed description of the nature and activities of licensed animal shelters in the state of Michigan. Best practice recommendations drawn from a variety of respected professional and academic sources were compared to extant practices across a wide variety of shelters. Five research questions framed the survey and case study analyses presented here:

1. What are the best practice recommendations in animal sheltering?
2. What is the extent of the use of best practices in animal shelters?
3. Which shelter traits, programs, and activities are most strongly associated with optimal outcomes such as live release rates?
4. What should animal shelters be doing to foster better outcomes?
5. What avenues should future research on animal sheltering take?

This chapter will revisit these questions, concluding with a specific focus on question five regarding future research.

### What Are the Best Practice Recommendations in Animal Sheltering?

As noted at several points in the book, best practices in animal sheltering and welfare are constantly evolving. The survey sent to the directors of licensed animal shelters in Michigan could not include questions regarding all possible best practices nor in as much depth as would likely be desired by shelter directors and staff. Based on an assessment of the sources of professional recommendations, a list of practices was selected

that hopefully addresses the most critical aspects of animal sheltering activity. Best practices were organized into ten categories: the nature and maintenance of the shelter facility; data management; population management both inside the shelter and in the service area; animal care; health and emergency protocols; use and training of volunteers; animal enrichment; adoption procedures; staffing and training; and, community relations. Drawn from the checklists provided in Chapter 2, Best Practices in Animal Sheltering, the following best practices were identified. Although not uniformly categorized in professional standards there is an implicit priority ordering among these activities, i.e., a number are essential (**bold**), others are important (*italics*), and some are desirable but may not be possible in shelters at all resource levels.

### Nature and Maintenance of the Facility

- **Create isolation areas for sick animals, ideally with separate air circulation if possible**
- **Phase out single, small cages when possible**
- **Phase out cages with wire mesh bottoms**
- **Have kennels/cages that are large enough that animals can move in species specific ways**
- *Allow for visual and auditory separation between species*
- *Use kennels that are easy to clean and sanitize*
- *Provide beds and hiding places*
- Consider co-housing options for appropriate animals
- Have separate spaces for staff, adoptions, intake, euthanasia
- Provide hand sanitizers for staff, volunteers, and the public

### Data Management

- **Keep records of all traits of animals upon intake**
- **Document all medical issues and treatment**
- **Document all behavioral issues**
- **Document results of behavioral assessment**
- *Include photographs and microchip numbers if present*
- *Include owner relinquishment notes if possible*

### Population Management

- **Determine shelter capacity**
- *Provide fostering and transfer as options when capacity is reached*
- *Spay/neuter all animals before they leave the shelter*
- *Provide microchipping for all animals*

- Facilitate licensing of animals if that is within the responsibility of the shelter (i.e., those with animal control functions)
- Implement Trap Neuter and Return (TNR) programs for cats

## Animal Care

- **Implement a daily cleaning routine that meets Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)/the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals guidelines**
- **Separate animals from the area being cleaned**
- **Disinfect all toys, litter boxes, bedding regularly**
- **Have a designated order for cleaning**
- **Follow professional guidelines such as those provided by HSUS for feeding**
- **Use recommended procedures for removing dogs and cats from kennels**
- **Train staff on these procedures**

## Health and Emergency Protocols

- **Create mission and policy and procedures statements following the National Animal Care and Control Association (NACA) guidelines**
- **Create disaster plans for both disease outbreaks and natural disasters**
- **Isolate all animals coming in to the shelter**
- **Provide a medical examination for all incoming animals**
- *Administer core vaccines at intake*
- *Administer parasite preventative at intake*
- *Inspect all animals daily for medical concerns*
- Use double sided kennels for cats if possible

## Volunteers

- *Provide proper orientation and training along with a contract for behavior, confidentiality*
- *Define roles for volunteers that include hands-on animal care*
- *Designate a staff member or volunteer for oversight of the volunteer program*
- Assess volunteer experiences regularly and provide avenues for volunteer input

## Animal Enrichment

- **Systematically assess behavior at intake; train staff to conduct this assessment**

- **Provide regular social contact with humans as well as con-specific interaction if appropriate**
- *Provide at least two opportunities daily for dog exercise consistent with the ASCPA guidelines for a dog walking protocol*
- *Use foster care for young animals, medical and behavior issues, for shelter breaks, and for animals not doing well in the shelter*
- *Provide toys, chew toys, feeding toys, and rotate frequently*
- Consider dog training programs that focus on positive reinforcement

### Adoption Practices

- *Try to match potential adopters with animals*
- *Consider open adoption processes which lower barriers and incorporate two-way discussions*
- Follow up with adopters to assess their experience, identify medical and behavioral issues, and provide resources
- Conduct dog interactions
- Consider proactive pricing systems that account for differences in animals

### Staffing and Training

- **Use a staffing formula to determine needs (an example provided by NACA)**
- **Fully train staff before beginning tasks**
- *Be aware of and provide resources for compassion fatigue*
- Consider cross-training and job rotations

### Community Relations

- Provide adult and child humane education via staff or volunteers
- Be present in the community by attending events
- Consider junior volunteer programs
- Bring the community in to the shelter for tours, events, days of service

## What Is the Extent of the Use of Best Practices in Animal Shelters?

While the survey responses showed that there is wide variation among Michigan shelters in traits such as age of facility,

size and capacity, resources, staffing, and volunteers, many best practice recommendations are widespread even given this variation. The large majority of shelters exceed cleaning and sanitization guidelines, use proper methods of euthanasia when necessary, sterilize animals prior to leaving the shelter, provide proper medical care, engage in training of volunteers, offer a number of enrichment activities to both cats and dogs, engage in community outreach, and collect the full range of animal documentation.

Yet, several areas of concern were identified that should be considered and addressed by shelter directors and staff. These issues are summarized below:

- While shelters tend not to operate beyond capacity and few euthanize to create space, other recommended solutions to address capacity issues are not as commonly employed. Most critically, foster care and transfers among shelters to reduce overcrowding and increase capacity could optimally be used to a greater extent.
- Trap, neuter, and return programs are not common. Given a good bit of research on the importance of TNR in reducing feral cat populations, this is an area that needs to be addressed.
- Shelters provide the bulk of the medical services recommended but the use of analgesic pain management is not as widespread as it should be, there is little ongoing training for shelter medical staff, and spayed/neutered animals are not uniformly marked with ear cropping or tattoos. Pain medication and marking sterilized animals are not costly and could (and should be) done by any shelter.
- Training for staff is good in most areas with the important exceptions of medical training for veterinary staff, staff animal handling, and how to recognize and address compassion fatigue. This raises concerns about the health and safety of both staff and the animals and should be addressed.
- Although volunteers appear to have adequate training opportunities, the quality of that training is likely to vary. Little is done to solicit volunteer input; doing so can be important to volunteer morale and, in cases of high staff turnover, volunteers may have longer institutional memories and greater skills than many new staff ([Guenther, 2017](#)). Volunteers constitute an important resource for areas of shelter improvement and ideas about ways to improve any problematic issues. They are also often significant financial donors.
- While enrichment is widespread, cat enrichment tends to be more extensive and uniform than dog enrichment. This is

likely the case because toys, tools, and time required for cat enrichment are more modest. In particular, shelters need to consider how to increase the opportunities for dogs to have breaks, either through day trips to the community, overnight and foster breaks, running programs, hikes and other means of getting them out of the stress of the shelter and giving them an opportunity to act like dogs.

- Adoption best practice recommendations are being met with the exception of the fee structure in many shelters. Flat fees are widespread and do not address important variations in the nature of the animals such as age, breed, size, and other characteristics which may require discounts or might allow for premiums.

### **Which Shelter Traits, Programs, and Activities Are Most Strongly Associated With Optimal Outcomes Such as Live Release Rates?**

The analyses in Chapter 5, Relationships Among Shelter Traits and Activities explored the relationships between traits of the animal shelters whose directors responded to the survey and their activities and practices. The discussion ended with a summary of findings that run counter to conventional wisdom, specifically that financial resources, larger staff, and more volunteers necessarily allow shelters to engage in more best practice activities. Further it would also be reasonable to assume that open intake municipal shelters would have higher kill rates because they must admit larger numbers of animals and cannot select among those that are most adoptable nor can they refuse animals when they are at capacity (although many use waiting lists for owner relinquishments). A summary of the findings that belie convention wisdom is presented below:

- Shelters located in rural areas appear not to be disadvantaged in terms of resources such as budget, staff, or volunteers.
- City shelters have higher budgets but funding is otherwise unrelated to the organizational characteristics or open or limited intake status of shelters.
- The number of full time staff is unrelated to the number of activities conducted at shelters; part-time staff increase activity levels as do volunteers.
- Higher budgets are not related to the level of activities in and services provided by animal shelters.

- Age of the facility is not related to the level of activities and services provided.
- Being an open intake shelter does not limit the levels of activities and services provided.
- High resource shelters come in all organizational types and locations and have considerable variation in outcomes.

As noted at several points in the book, however, whether and what types of shelters do more of specific activities and even how close they come to implementing best practices is only important if the activities actually impact outcomes. The analyses in Chapter 6, Which Shelter Activities Are Associated With Positive Outcomes? explicitly addressed this question using correlation, regression, and path analysis with both average kill rates over time and change in kill rates over time as the dependent variables.

Several practices related to reductions in kill rates are relatively easy for any shelter to do: not listing estimated breed of dogs, having a robust transfer program (although this requires a staff member to organize live transfers or at the very least, a committed volunteer), and using volunteers for hands-on animal care. Even shelters with strong adoption programs may need to transfer animals to breed specific rescues, with medical problems, or with behavioral issues that cannot be addressed in a shelter environment. Transfer programs allow shelters to avoid euthanization for these animals.

While the overall number of volunteers was not significantly correlated with kill rates or change in rates, how volunteers are used was. Specifically, the use of volunteers for hands-on animal care and training is correlated with lower kill rates. Again, while a staff member is typically needed to run a vibrant volunteer program, the cost of that person is easily likely to result in reduced workloads for other staff, increased animal enrichment, increased capacity if the volunteer activity includes a foster program, greater outreach into the community, and potentially, enhanced donations. Volunteers can be a potent source of funding because many people prefer to donate money to efforts where they are also donating their time. Shelters should not limit their volunteers to “soft” activities such as dish washing, laundry, and community events since hands-on volunteer activities are correlated with positive outcomes.

Programs for dog and cat enrichment were noted by respondents as important facilitators of success and were correlated with lower kill rates. Providing enhanced services with adoptions—microchipping, dog and cat interactions, and adoption follow-ups—was also significantly correlated with lower kill

rates. These types of programs appear very important to shelter outcomes. To an extent resources allow for enrichment and adoption services to be provided. Thus, shelters with more part-time staff and without a county contract provide more dog enrichment. Limited access shelters, without a county contract, provide more cat enrichment. Enhanced adoption services are provided in shelters with more part-time, administrative and animal-care staff, and more volunteers, in limited access shelters with greater capacity, and in shelters without county contracts. The adoption services noted do not require money (microchipping is quite inexpensive) yet do require volunteers and/or staff to do follow-ups and conduct interactions. Interactions between shelter animals and dogs and cats already in the home are an important part of reducing the chance of returns although proper information on integrating the new animals must also be provided and followed. The enrichment activities are also almost cost free but again require volunteers and/or staff.

People resources appear more important than monetary ones. Having higher budgets is significantly correlated with more administrative and animal care staff and with more volunteers. Thus, higher budgets do not directly correlate with programs or with outcomes yet provide for the staffing and volunteers which do. In other words, just having more money does not guarantee that better outcomes will result. And, even shelters with fewer resources appear to be able to improve their outcomes by avoiding breed labels that may stigmatize particular dogs and by creating a network of rescue and shelter transfer partners.

Community support was also noted as an important facilitator of success and the index of community activities was significantly correlated with lower kill rates. Related to this, ignorance about proper animal care in the areas served by the shelters was the most important barrier mentioned as inhibiting the success of the organization. Thus, what goes on outside the shelter is almost as important as what goes on inside it. Being present at community events and inviting the public into the shelter are important in establishing good will, increasing awareness about the shelter and its mission, and potentially increasing donations and adoptions.

The most important variables leading to lower average kill rates, based on the correlation and path analysis, were: use of volunteers for hands-on animal care and enrichment, basic cat and dog enrichment, training for staff on how to recognize medical and mental health issues in animals, and on how to handle animals and interact with people. It is useful to revisit

the specific activities that comprise these indexes and examine how frequently they are present in the responding shelters. [Table 9.1](#) provides a summary of the component activities and the percent of shelters that do the activity to a large extent and that never do it.

While well over half of the shelters use volunteers for cat comforting and dog walking, having volunteers involved in dog training and foster care are less common; indeed only 37% and

### Table 9.1 Frequency of Critical Activities

|                                                | Large Extent (%) | Never (%) |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| <b><i>Hard Use of Volunteers</i></b>           |                  |           |
| Foster care                                    | 37               | 21        |
| Cat comforting                                 | 55               | 14        |
| Dog walking                                    | 58               | 11        |
| Dog training                                   | 20               | 23        |
| <b><i>Health/Stress Training Staff</i></b>     |                  |           |
| Ongoing training for medical staff             | 16               | 37        |
| Recognize pain                                 | 45               | 5         |
| Assess shelter adjustment                      | 42               | 8         |
| Assess signs of stress                         | 55               | 6         |
| <b><i>People/Animal Training for Staff</i></b> |                  |           |
| How to interact with public                    | 60               | 2         |
| How to interact with volunteers                | 53               | 5         |
| Dog handling                                   | 67               | 8         |
| Cat handling                                   | 67               | 8         |
| Animal training                                | 35               | 10        |
| <b><i>Cat Enrichment Basic</i></b>             |                  |           |
| Cat comforting                                 | 86               | 2         |
| Enrichment toys                                | 88               | 3         |
| Co-housing                                     | 48               | 12        |
| Communal room                                  | 59               | 25        |
| Places to hide                                 | 80               | 6         |
| Scratching posts                               | 75               | 6         |
| <b><i>Dog Enrichment Basic</i></b>             |                  |           |
| Outside play yard                              | 82               | 9         |
| Enrichment toys                                | 65               | 8         |
| Chew toys                                      | 70               | 6         |

20% of shelters use volunteers in these ways, respectively. The low frequency of foster programs is particularly concerning since they are a way to expand the capacity of the shelter and avoid euthanasia by providing shelter breaks, giving sick animals a chance to recover, addressing behavioral problems, and for saving very young animals. It appears that shelters could improve their save rates by instituting or expanding their foster care programs and by using volunteers to enhance the shelters' ability to provide behavioral training to dogs.

Overall, 23% of the responding shelters have fewer than 10 volunteers, only 38% have more than 50. Thus, while some of the shelters have high numbers of volunteers, the substantial number that have only a handful could obviously expand their ability to engage in critical practices such as animal enrichment and potentially, the operation of a transfer program, if they were able to engage more volunteers. Based on interviews with shelter staff, larger volunteer programs can be a double-edged sword. While volunteers expand capacity they also require training and supervision and might not always do procedures correctly. For some animal welfare directors, turning control over to volunteers is a difficult proposition. Indeed, surveys of shelter staff indicate that "nurturing" volunteers is challenging in that a balance must be created between ensuring that they follow shelter policies and processes without appearing "ungrateful or upsetting folk" (Stavisky, Brennan, Downes, & Dean, 2017, p. 491). Shelter directors need to weigh the substantial benefits of volunteers against the need to maintain some level of oversight or control.

Basic dog and cat enrichment is provided at the majority of the shelters. Co-housing of animals is the least frequently implemented activity, perhaps reflecting the division in the literature and among specialists regarding the costs and benefits of that approach. It should be noted that while basic animal enrichment was significantly correlated with lower kill rates in multiple regression, enhanced enrichment such as play groups, pack hikes, outdoor access for cats, and individualized behavior plans for dogs were not. While these activities are likely to make the animal's stay more enjoyable and reduce stress, they do not directly lead to lower kill rates. For shelters with limited resources, providing basic enrichment may well be sufficient.

Training of volunteers was a significant correlate of lower average kill rates. While many shelters provide such training, there is some cause for concern regarding staff training. Only 16% of the shelters provide ongoing training for medical staff which might keep them abreast of changes in the field or new

processes or procedures. Less than half of the shelters train staff on how to recognize pain and problems with shelter adjustment in the animals. Further, only 35% of the shelters offer support or workshops on how to provide additional training for animals with behavioral issues. And, the fact that 8% of the shelters never provide any training to staff on critical issues such as animal handling is concerning. Basic training for staff on all of these issues should be offered in all shelters and, if done by in-house staff, could be done at relatively low cost.

Transfer programs are significantly correlated with both lower average kill rates and a reduction in kill rates over time. Isolation of transferred animals is also vital. Only 11% of the shelters often transfer animals to other shelters and 20% often transfer to a rescue. Given the importance of transferring animals in reducing euthanasia these rates are quite low. Further, 15% of shelters sometimes or never isolate new animals from the general population when they arrive on a transfer. Not doing so can increase the chance of a serious outbreak of diseases such as parvo or canine influenza (if a dog is exposed to the latter the chances of catching it near 100%; <http://pets.webmd.com/dogs/features/dog-flu-canine-influenza#2>) which can lead to multiple euthanasias.

## What Should Animal Shelters Be Doing to Achiever Better Outcomes?

In addition to the practices and activities that remain correlated with outcomes in multiple regression and path analysis, it is important to consider the more numerous activities that showed bivariate correlations with lower kill rates, if only in single years. These activities too are part of the save rate calculus. A number of these are briefly reiterated and summarized below. Activities and processes correlated with lower kill rates that should be embraced by shelters include:

- Enhanced adoption services particularly including micro-chipping (which can be purchased for as little as \$5 from some sources), dog interactions, and follow-ups with new adopters—all relatively inexpensive services. Some shelters charge a small fee for staff to conduct dog interactions.
- Isolation of new animals, particularly those received on a transfer.
- Basic enrichment activities for both dogs and cats.
- Outreach to the larger community.

The last issue is important for several reasons. First, one of the most significant barriers to shelter success is ignorance in the community about proper animal care and population management and lack of awareness of shelter activities. One of the most significant facilitators is community support particularly through donations and volunteers. Thus, shelters should show a presence at community events such as fairs and festivals, engage in presentations for community groups such as Chambers of Commerce, offer tours of the facility, and take adoptable animals to appropriate community venues. None of these activities are costly and could be done by volunteers or board members. Humane education programs offered at schools or onsite, camps and other activities for children such as a junior volunteer program, adult humane education materials on animal care, and listings of resources for low cost spay/neuter and medical care are all important ways to increase community knowledge about proper animal care. While these might require staff resources, employing volunteers for humane education is an effective but often underutilized practice according to the survey.

The regression and path analyses identified several activities that are critical to the achievement of positive outcomes that can and should be implemented in any shelter:

- Training programs for staff and volunteers that focus on animal handling and how to recognize medical and behavioral issues. Just having a large workforce will not support the achievement of positive outcomes unless proper training is provided.
- People resources (properly trained) in the forms of staff and volunteers are critical to positive outcomes. There does not appear to be widespread use of volunteers in shelters with limited resources. Such shelters should embrace volunteers to perform a variety of tasks from animal enrichment to humane education.
- How volunteers are used is also connected to lower kill rates. Shelters should include hands-on animal care, handling, and enrichment among the tasks assigned to volunteers. Because the number of administrative staff is linked to the number of volunteers it appears a good investment to assign a staff member to create and implement a volunteer program.
- Transfer programs are vital to shelter success and require the development of a network of transfer partners. Shelters with space for animals (particularly limited intake shelters) should be cognizant of other shelters in their area that cannot do adoptions or are open intake and often operate at or

over capacity and be active in transferring them to their facilities. While inter-state transfer programs do help animals from other regions of the country, it would appear equally desirable to ensure that neighboring struggling shelters are given primary consideration.

- Foster programs are vital to address capacity issues and to avoid euthanasia for sick, very young animals, or those with treatable behavioral issues. Yet many shelters do not appear to be making regular use of such programs. Devoting a staff member or designating a volunteer to ensure the implementation and operation of a robust foster program is vital.
- Avoiding the identification of dog breed, particularly related to presumed “pit bull” mixes is desirable and cost free. While some websites such as Petfinder require a field for “breed,” using neutral language like “mixed” is optimal. Some shelters enter a breed guess on Petfinder and in intake systems but do not include breed on cage cards or other promotional materials. This avoids the stigma associated with “pit bulls” and aids in their adoption, and, based on the regression analysis, significantly lowers euthanasia.

## Inspections, Complaints, and the Role of State Oversight

The lack of variation in the inspection and complaint data is a significant cause for concern, since it seems difficult to expect that all shelters in the state have no or just one or two violations (often the same ones), particularly given the age of the facilities and in some cases, minimal staffing and budget. Several impressionistic interpretations can be posed. First, based on reading and coding all of the individual violation reports which range in severity from incomplete descriptions of the animals in the database to unsafe enclosures, it seems clear that the same types of relative minor issues are raised in many shelters. These often include minor problems with the floors (flaking paint or the need to reseal them). The most frequently cited violations are: animal enclosure surfaces that are not constructed of a nonabsorbent material (20 total citations in 2013 and 14 in 2014), and interior building surfaces that are not constructed of a nonabsorbent material (13 citations in 2013 and 8 in 2014). Other violations that were identified at least four times in these 2 years were animal descriptions not complete, adoption fees did not include a \$25 nonrefundable deposit, kennel enclosures not in good repair, and structure was not sound and

in good repair so as to prevent injury to animals. In 2013 there were a total of 86 individual citations across the shelters responding to the survey; in 2014 there were 43. However, in 2015 and 2016 there were a total of three citations across all of the responding shelters. Numbers of inspection violations across the population of shelters in Michigan show similar patterns with only 17 violations across 183 shelters in 2015 and 2016.

These low violation rates could result from several factors. Perhaps shelters had made and maintained improvements in previous years and thus there were no violations. However, given the lack of personnel at MDARD, the potential magnitude of violations in some shelters, and the concern that poorer shelters will not be able to address violations, it is possible that many problems are simply not recorded. This sense is borne out in the inspection reports from the facility housing Detroit Animal Control up until 2017. The number of concerns at the old facility in every aspect of animal care were of a magnitude that is difficult to describe unless one was inside the shelter. Yet, MDARD only recorded four violations. Had they recorded all violations there would have been no way that DAC could have corrected the conditions given the nature of the shelter and the fact that they had no operating budget. The low number of violations across the shelters suggests that MDARD is cutting them significant (and very likely too much) slack. It should also be noted that very few shelters were actually inspected in 2014 and 2015. Again, staffing at the state level may be too low to allow for the mandated inspections. This leads to a number of recommendations for state level action including:

- Increases in MDARD staff.
- An increased willingness to levy fines for failure to report annual activity data.
- A more rigorous inspection process.
- Consideration of the feasibility of creating an audit system for annual activity reports that include data on the disposition of animals.

This last issue is important because of the self-reported nature of the kill statistics, the tendency for shelters to double count returns as additional adoptions, variability in the detail of the data provided (i.e., many shelters do not report owner-requested euthanasias separately and do not report disposition by age of animal). One possibility would be to institute an online reporting system to standardize the data (much like the state's municipal fiscal reporting portal) with rolling, randomized audits.

## Lessons From the Case Studies

Seven shelters were the subject of case studies selected among the most improved and those with consistently high save rates. There were significant differences between the four shelters with the greatest improvements in save rates in terms of where their save rates were in 2012 and in the magnitude of their improvement. Detroit Animal Care and Control (DACC) and Genesee County Animal Control (GCAC) were, by any standards, not effective in terms of their save rates, with the situation for animal welfare at DACC the most dire. Harbor Humane was slightly better at the outset and hence did not experience as large an increase in save rates. Capital Area Humane Society (CAHS) was already relatively successful and improved to a very high level of success. The most improved shelters also represent different organizational structures (three are open access county or city shelters while one is a limited access nonprofit). The nature of the communities served is also quite different ranging from the extremely economically stressed residents of the city of Detroit to the much better off citizens served by Harbor Humane and CAHS. Thus, the challenges shelters face in trying to improve vary and even very poor shelters can make great strides. Clearly shelters move along a spectrum of improvement; success is not a steady state.

Starting at a different place meant that DACC and GCAC had to address a more fundamental set of problems to improve. No transformation would have occurred in either shelter without leadership change at the top of the organization. The new directors and leadership teams had extensive animal welfare experience and came into their jobs with strong and important connections to networks of other shelters and rescues. Neither shelter had standard operating procedures for any tasks. Basic animal and human safety were the first needs that had to be addressed. Both directors understood that patience and time would be required for the shelters to move forward. DACC and GCAC needed first to ensure that animals were being fed and cared for properly. Appropriate medical care needed to be provided and actions taken to prevent the spread of disease. Human and nonhuman animal safety had to be ensured through proper cleaning procedures, animal handling, and behavior testing. All of these needs had to be met before the shelters could move on to the transfer of animals, the use of volunteers (although GCAC always had volunteers, DACC did not), animal enrichment, and community relations. The lesson from DACC in particular is that any shelter, no matter how

challenged, can improve their outcomes. The outcomes may still not be optimal and the continuing challenges great, but with a committed and professional leadership change can occur. And, it can occur at open intake, public shelters with resource constraints and capacity challenges.

Harbor Humane and Capital Area Humane Societies were already performing at a reasonably high level of effectiveness at the beginning to the study period. Consequently, the magnitude of their improvements is less and the types of activities they undertook to improve are very different. While one of these shelters had a leadership change, improvements there were already underway; CAHS has had stable leadership for a number of years. Thus, a complete leadership change appears not to be required in shelters that have a good record of performance. In these cases, a willingness to keep up with changing best practices and experiment accordingly is sufficient. Adoption processes were streamlined in both cases to facilitate and encourage adoptions. Breed labels were removed from the dogs and foster programs expanded. How animals were tested, treated, and trained were changed to allow more to be successful and adoptable. Volunteers were used for hands-on activities and enrichment for both dogs and cats. Both CAHS and Harbor Humane accept transfers from struggling shelters; their mission extends beyond the animals in their shelters or in their communities.

The shelters with the consistently highest save rates also say much about paths to success and what it means to be successful. The Humane Society of Huron Valley (HSHV) and the CAHS are the most similar organizations as far as their paths to success. They have had stable leadership that is open to new ideas and change policies accordingly, many volunteers that engage in hands-on work with the animals, vibrant foster programs to save animals that need extra support and also to expand their capacity, and varied and high-quality enrichment programs. Yet, there are differences in practices illustrating that there is variation even among the most successful shelters. For example, while they both have transport programs to bring puppies from the south, CAHS keeps them in isolation for a longer period of time. Capital Area has also removed breed labels from all of their dogs while HSHV has not. The organizations are also different in their structure, funding, and intake. HSHV, because of the county contract, is open intake for any animal from Washtenaw County. CAHS as a nonprofit without such a contract has more control over the types of animals they accept.

Adopt-A-Pet is a much smaller shelter than HSHV and CAHS. Their high save rates are possible because of their

leadership, volunteers, foster program, strong community support, and extensive enrichment activities. But, they are also made possible because the shelter can and does accept only those animals they are confident will be easily adopted. Thus, they are able to offer a level of services to their animals that larger shelters typically cannot and they can avoid taking hard to place dogs that might need to be euthanized for behavioral issues. Thus, while they share the same attributes as the other two successful shelters, they are also aided by their modest size and limited intake.

Roscommon County Animal Control is an outlier and provides an important lesson about how success is measured for animal shelters. They have an almost 100% save rate across a number of years even though they are an open intake shelter. Yet, they do not engage in many of the best practices visible at the other successful shelters. There are no volunteers and no foster program. Enrichment activity is minimal. It seems that their success is the result of the fact that they typically refuse to admit animals that most open intake shelters would receive; stray cats and dogs that have been involved in a bite incident, for example. They also do not assist other shelters unless there is an emergency and, even then, typically only neighboring communities. As a result of this cherry picking, their shelter is almost empty, leaving slack resources that potentially do not meet the needs of either the local community or the larger animal welfare world. Under these conditions does the perfect save rate really indicate a successful animal shelter?

As suggested at various points in this book, “success” in animal sheltering goes beyond the simple save rates used here because of data availability. Shelter administrators pointed to a variety of better and/or additional measures of success that need to be considered in fully evaluating shelter best practices:

- Good community relationships.
- Strong public support.
- Retention of animals in their homes/shelter diversion.
- Meeting community service needs.
- Meeting the needs of the larger welfare community.

## **Study Limitations/Future Research**

There are some obvious limitations to this study, the most critical being sample size and that the population is restricted to a single state. Comparison of available data between the responding shelters and the population indicates that they are

similar in budget resources and kill rates, two critical features of sheltering. Thus, it does not appear that responses were biased toward better resourced or more successful shelters. There is no reason *a priori* to think that the responding shelters differ systematically from the population on other traits and activities that might affect outcomes. Although the survey was long and comprehensive it was not possible to include all elements of best practice recommendations and thus it is possible that important activities or practices were not considered.

As just noted, there are shortcomings with the outcome data but they are the best available for shelters in the state. While shelters are required to report kill rates each year, some do not and there is no state accounting system to ensure that the data provided are accurate. Common shelter practices such as counting returned animals as a second adoption can inflate save rates. Shelters with multiple locations report their data together. Most shelters are not inspected annually as required by state law.

Future research is warranted and could address some of these limitations. First, based on the findings in this book, shelter practices matter more than the traits of the shelter itself implying that all types of shelters can reduce their kill rates. Extending the study to shelters nationally or at least in several other states would increase generalizability, identify practices and challenges in other parts of the country, and increase the likelihood of shelters using the recommendations contained herein. Such an effort would be resource and time-intensive since a list of animal shelters in specific states would have to be developed. While national organizations such as the NAIA collect data from shelters nation-wide, reporting is voluntary and just a handful of shelters from each state typically provide information (<http://shelterproject.naiaonline.org/page/about>).

The findings suggest that there are a variety of stakeholders beyond shelter administrators whose attitudes and opinions would be an excellent focus for future research. These would include volunteers, adopters, local and county officials, and the directors of nonlicensed animal rescues that operate in the same geographic areas as the shelters. Perceptions of the shelter in the broader community were raised as both a barrier and facilitator by shelter directors. Exploring and comparing attitudes and suggestions of these internal and external stakeholders should provide valuable information on shelter practices and where improvements in community relations could be made.

In a similar vein networks of transfer partners are a critical part of shelter success. DACC has been able to turn around their outcome statistics by the creation and active use of transfer partners. Given the centrality of partner shelters and rescues it would be informative to explore the networks of animal rescue organizations in the state at large and in particular communities as well. Questions of focus could include: how these networks developed and change over time; how and why transfer programs were instituted; what factors appear to lead to their success and expansion of partner organizations; and whether there are any concerns or pitfalls to such programs that should be avoided.

The larger community that the shelters serve was identified as a significant barrier to success of the organization. Directors raised issues such as lack of proper animal population management, poor animal care practices, preferences or aversions to particular “breeds” (typically pit bull-type dogs which tend to predominate in particular shelters and are more difficult to get adopted or transferred). More research attention should be focused on the larger community looking at community traits (income, education), animal welfare cultures (e.g., Are street dogs common? Is there dog fighting? Are dogs chained in yards or allowed to wander?), and the larger animal welfare infrastructure. This would include consideration of the availability of veterinary medical care, day cares, dog parks, breeders, and pet shops to assess the density and types of other entities that might support or hinder effective shelter outcomes. Other research has also pointed to broader community analysis as being a critical next step in shelter research because of its role in potential financial support, as a source of volunteers, and because of it being an important source of animal relinquishment ([Rogelberg et al., 2007](#)).

The existence of an external Board of Directors is common among the shelters, particularly for those that are nonprofits. Shelter directors indicated that the presence of a good board can be a significant facilitator of success. Boards also appear important to community relations efforts and, of course, fund raising. Future research could look at the composition and effectiveness of Boards of Directors making recommendations for such issues as optimal size, balance of skills (community influentials versus members with sheltering experience), terms of service, extent of hands-on role in shelter decision-making, lines of communication between the board and shelter staff and volunteers, and so on.

Shelters vary in the extent of their resources and their funding models. While overall budget has little relationship to successful outcomes, it is related to staffing. Why are some shelters struggling financially (even when located in prosperous urbanized areas) and others are not? Are some funding models more effective or sustainable than others? What should be the optimal balance between grant-seeking, donations, and major fund-raising events? All of these questions are ripe for future research and would provide important information to, particularly, struggling shelters.

Research and practice on dog behavior testing is always in flux. For example, some research has found that in shelters using the Sternberg temperament testing protocol, almost 41% of dogs passing the test in the shelter showed signs of aggression in their adoptive homes (Christensen, Scarlett, Campagna, & Houpt, 2007), however the definition of aggression was very broad including barking and lunging at other dogs or other behaviors that would fall within the bounds of normal prey drives. Others have suggested that it is impossible to assess temperament in shelters because of high stress levels and the need to assess behavior over a long period of time and in a variety of environments (Segurson D'Arpino, 2007). In short, a variety of methods should be used to understand behavior including temperament testing, owner notes, training notes, adoption screening, and adoption follow-ups (Segurson D'Arpino, 2007). Many professionals are now suggesting that dog reaction and aggression be tested only in multi-dog play groups as opposed to barrier assessments (<https://dogsplaying-forlife.com/about-play-for-life/>). The survey did not include questions about how dogs are tested for aggression to humans, guarding issues (food/toys), aggression or reactivity to other dogs and so on. Are shelters using best practices for behavior testing? What are the qualifications of the individuals doing the testing? What types of adoption restrictions are placed on the animals? These are all questions ripe for future research.

Offering enhanced adoption services was a significant correlate of lower kill rates. However, shelters and recommendations differ regarding how rigorous and time-consuming adoption processes should be. Many shelters offer same day adoptions on primarily a first come first served basis (HSHV for example) while others take a number of applications for the same animal, use several days to check references, and then select the best fitting placement (HSLC for example). Further research has suggested that not reducing barriers to adoptions such as eschewing home checks and relaxing restrictions for fencing or

requiring that someone be in the home during the day leads to longer shelter stays and potentially higher euthanasia rates (Stavisky et al., 2017). Some have even questioned the long-held recommendation that shelter animals not be given as gifts (Weiss, Dolan, Garrison, Hong, & Slater, 2013) or that shelters should not offer free adoptions (<http://chewonthis.maddies-fund.org/2017/08/the-truth-about-free-pet-adoptions/>). Further research on the outcomes associated with different adoption procedures would be useful.

Staff training was significantly correlated with several best practices that lead to better outcomes for shelter animals. The survey was too long to be able to include questions specifically for staff. Further surveys of or interviews with shelter staff would be a critical way of gaining information about their needs for training, challenges and effects of compassion fatigue, and similarities and differences in attitudes between shelter administration and staff. It should also be noted that while staff training can have an impact on euthanasia rates, high euthanasia rates can also impact staffing in the form of higher turnover. Thus, future research should attempt to disentangle the recursive relationships between staffing, training, turnover and outcomes. Surveys of or interviews with shelter volunteers would also provide another perspective on shelter practice and is important, because volunteers allow for a number of best practices that produce better outcomes.

## Revisiting the Tale of Two Aces

The story of the two Aces that began this book represents two ends of the spectrum from the very dire conditions present at the old Detroit Animal Control (DAC) when Ace arrived there to the second Ace's state of the art stay at HSHV. The data and case studies show that shelters generally fall somewhere between these two extremes. Many of the activities, policies, and practices outlined in these chapters contribute to moving shelters toward HSHV Ace's experience. And, many of the most important activities are relatively low cost that almost any shelter can do regardless of size and resources and whether it is open or limited intake, urban or rural, or municipal or non-profit. The most important attribute of shelters, the one that made the most difference between the fates of the two Aces, however, was leadership. Changes in leadership in Detroit moved its municipal shelter from DAC to DACC; in other words, put the care in animal control. The other most improved

shelters had leadership changes while the high performing shelters had stable leadership that was open to new ideas and knowledgeable about changing best practices.

Between the time that the first and last chapters of this book were written, further changes have occurred at DACC. Both Directors Miller and McLaughlin have resigned, in large part due to frustration with the level and pace of resources provided the shelter by the City of Detroit. The budget has recently been cut and basic supplies such as dog food and titer tests for parvo have run out because of delays in the city's purchasing process. Yet, there are ever more pressures on DACC to pick up strays and hold bite and court cases. This increase in demand along with decreases in support have destabilized the leadership at the shelter and threaten the very significant changes that have occurred over the past several years. This presents a final important lesson, everything changes and no shelter can take for granted that its resources or environment will remain stable. Thus, the challenge of providing high-quality animal welfare and sheltering services will remain. Communities, volunteers, and shelter staff and administrators will always have to deal with change and be committed to ensuring that the Aces of the world are cared for in the most humane and enriched environment possible. The lessons presented in this book will aid in that effort.

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# **APPENDIX A: MICHIGAN ANIMAL SHELTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION**

AH-025 (rev. 5/17)

**Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development**

P.O. Box 30017, Lansing, MI 48909-8276

Phone: 517-284-5771 Fax: 517-241-4640

Email: [animalshelters@michigan.gov](mailto:animalshelters@michigan.gov)

In accordance with Act 287, PA 1969 as amended

**Animal Shelter Registration Application****no fee required**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <b>Type of Animal Shelter:</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> Animal Control Shelter <input type="checkbox"/> Animal Protection Shelter                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |               | <b>Status:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Initial Application <input type="checkbox"/> Animal Housing Modifications/Additions<br><input type="checkbox"/> Reapplication <input type="checkbox"/> Closure/Withdrawal; effective date: _____ |                                          |
| <b>Animal Shelter Building Information</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                          |
| Full Legal Name of the Shelter:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                          |
| Physical Address of the Shelter:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                          |
| City:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | State: MI     | County:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Zip code:                                |
| Zoning Approval? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, contact name:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |               | Phone:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> No, none needed |
| Business Phone:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Business Fax: | Business Email:                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                          |
| Mailing address if different from above, Street or P.O. Box:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                          |
| City:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | State:        | County:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Zip code:                                |
| <b>Business/Organization Information</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                          |
| Ownership Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Municipality/Government <input type="checkbox"/> Corporation <input type="checkbox"/> Sole Ownership* <input type="checkbox"/> L.L.C. <input type="checkbox"/> Partnership <input type="checkbox"/> Other: specify _____                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                          |
| Full Legal Name of the Business/Organization:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                          |
| MI Corporate/LARA ID #:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |               | Federal Tax ID (FEIN) #:                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                          |
| Owner/President/CEO Name:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |               | Title:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                          |
| Corporate Address if different from above:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                          |
| City:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | State:        | County:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Zip code:                                |
| Business Phone:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Business Fax: | Business Email:                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                          |
| Emergency Contact name:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |               | Emergency Phone:                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                          |
| Business website url:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |               | *County assumed name/DBA expiration date:                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                          |
| Required documents provided? <input type="checkbox"/> Shelter floor plan & site map (required for initial, reapplications, building modifications/additions)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Copy of assumed name/doing business as certificate                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                          |
| <b>Shelter Veterinarian(s) Information</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                          |
| Primary Veterinarian:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |               | MI Lic. #:                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Email:                                   |
| Veterinary Hospital/Clinic Name:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <input type="checkbox"/> not applicable  |
| Hospital/Clinic Address (if not applicable, then provide the Primary Veterinarian's Address, City, State, Zip Code, phone):                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                          |
| Address:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | City:         | State:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Zip Code: Phone:                         |
| Additional Veterinarians that the shelter may use:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                          |
| Veterinarian:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | MI Lic. #:    | Email:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                          |
| Veterinarian:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | MI Lic. #:    | Email:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                          |
| By signing below I certify that the foregoing is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and that I will comply with the provisions of Act 287, PA 1969, as amended, and all the regulations promulgated thereunder. Pursuant to R 285.151.12(2) An Animal Control Shelter Application must be signed by the chair of the board of commissioners, city manager or mayor, and an Animal Protection Shelter Application must be signed by the President or Owner of the organization. |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                          |
| Printed Name:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |               | Title:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                          |
| Signature:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |               | Date:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                          |

[www.michigan.gov/mda-licensing](http://www.michigan.gov/mda-licensing)

## **APPENDIX B: ANIMAL SHELTER ANNUAL REPORT**



Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Animal Industry Division  
P.O. Box 30017, Lansing, MI 48909  
[www.michigan.gov/animalshelters](http://www.michigan.gov/animalshelters)  
Email [animalshelters@michigan.gov](mailto:animalshelters@michigan.gov)

## Animal Shelter Annual Report

In accordance with Act 287, PA 1969 as amended

| Animal Shelter Information                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                            |          |        |                          |                                         |                          |                         |   |             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------|--------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|---|-------------|
| Full Legal Name of the Animal Shelter                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                            |          |        |                          | Shelter Operated By (organization name) |                          |                         |   |             |
| Name of Shelter Manager                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                            | Zip Code | County |                          | Email                                   |                          |                         |   |             |
| Act 287, Section 9(a) requires that animal shelters maintain written records on the total number of dogs, cats, ferrets and other animals received by the shelter and provide certain annual statistics to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) by March 31st, of the year following the year for which the statistics were compiled. |                                            |          |        |                          |                                         |                          |                         |   |             |
| Year Reporting Statistics For (4 digit)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                            |          |        | Main Companion Animals   |                                         |                          | Other Companion Animals |   | Total Other |
| Type of Companion Animals <sup>1</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                            |          |        | Dogs                     | Cats                                    | Ferrets                  |                         |   |             |
| Check box if shelter did NOT intake last year                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                            |          |        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>                | <input type="checkbox"/> |                         |   |             |
| Shelter Intakes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Less than six (6) months of age            |          |        |                          |                                         |                          |                         |   |             |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Six (6) months of age & older              |          |        |                          |                                         |                          |                         |   |             |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Total Intake                               |          |        | 0                        | 0                                       | 0                        |                         |   | 0           |
| Shelter Adoptions <sup>2</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Altered (before adoption)                  |          |        |                          |                                         |                          |                         |   |             |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Not Altered (before adoption)              |          |        |                          |                                         |                          |                         |   |             |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Total Adopted To New Owners                |          |        | 0                        | 0                                       | 0                        |                         |   | 0           |
| Other Disposition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Total Returned to Owner                    |          |        |                          |                                         |                          |                         |   |             |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Total Sold <sup>3</sup> for Research       |          |        |                          |                                         |                          |                         |   |             |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Total Transferred <sup>3</sup> To Shelters |          |        |                          |                                         |                          | 0                       | 0 | 0           |
| Euthanasia                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Shelter Animals Euthanized                 |          |        |                          |                                         |                          |                         |   |             |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Owner Request Euthanization <sup>4</sup>   |          |        |                          |                                         |                          |                         |   |             |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Total Euthanized                           |          |        | 0                        | 0                                       | 0                        | 0                       | 0 | 0           |
| Shelter Euthanasia Policy. Please select <b>ONLY</b> one, regarding your shelter:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                            |          |        |                          |                                         |                          |                         |   |             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> This shelter does NOT provide euthanasia services to the public.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                            |          |        |                          |                                         |                          |                         |   |             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> This shelter provides euthanasia services to the public, and the owner requested euthanized animals ARE included in our intake totals.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                            |          |        |                          |                                         |                          |                         |   |             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> This shelter provides euthanasia services to the public, and the owner requested euthanized animals are NOT included in our intake totals.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                            |          |        |                          |                                         |                          |                         |   |             |
| Optional Comments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                            |          |        |                          |                                         |                          |                         |   |             |
| Submitter's Name and Title                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                            |          |        |                          | Submitter's Phone                       |                          | Submitter's Email       |   |             |

<sup>1</sup> Per MCL 287.331(d), report LIVE "animals"; specifically rodents, mammals except livestock as defined in Act 284 of 1937.

<sup>2</sup> Per MCL 287.339a, only LIVE animals that are sold get reported in this category. Do NOT include dead animals, carcasses that are sold for research, or road kill.

<sup>3</sup> Per MCL 287.338a(7), shelter animals may ONLY be transferred to other REGISTERED SHELTERS, law enforcement agencies, and certain service organizations. All other transactions are ADOPTIONS.

<sup>4</sup> Per MCL 287.339a shelters must report the number of animals by category they euthanize each year. If you are separately reporting shelter and "owner requested" animals, then you MUST indicate below whether the number of "owner requested" euthanized animals are also included in your intake numbers.

## **APPENDIX C: SURVEY**

*Shelter Best Practice Survey*

Dear Licensed Shelter Director:

The Global Urban Studies Program at Michigan State University is conducting a survey of all licensed animal shelters in the State of Michigan to better understand practices, procedures, and capacities for animal sheltering across the state. This research is being funded by the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research at MSU and is not in conjunction with any State licensing body. You are receiving this survey because you are the Executive Director of one of the roughly 200 licensed shelters in Michigan. Your responses to the survey will be kept completely confidential and only aggregate data will be reported; neither your name nor the name of your shelter will be identified. We know that you are very busy and the survey will likely take about 20 minutes of your time to answer. To express our gratitude there will be a drawing among all of the completed surveys for gift cards to PetSmart so that you can purchase supplies for the animals of your shelter. The following gift cards will be randomly awarded:

- Three gift cards of \$500 each
- Five gift cards of \$200 each
- Ten gift cards of \$100

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or stop participating at any time.

You will not receive any direct benefit from your participation in this study. There are no costs associated with your participation. Your privacy will be protected. All measures will be taken to protect your confidentiality. The results of this study might be presented in a professional venue, such as a journal or professional conference. In this event, only aggregate data will be presented.

You must complete the survey in one sitting. If you close your browser, you will not be able to return to the point at which you left off.

If you have any questions, please contact the principal investigator: Dr. Laura Reese (reesela@msu.edu).

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or email [irb@msu.edu](mailto:irb@msu.edu) or regular mail at 408 W. Circle Drive, Room 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Having read the information provided, you must decide whether or not you wish to participate in this study. By clicking "continue," you agree to participate in this research study. You may print a copy of this letter to keep, save it onto your hard drive, or email Dr. Reese to obtain a copy.

**\* 1. I agree to participate in the survey.**

☐ Continue

*Shelter Best Practice Survey*Shelter  
Traits**2. What is the age of your shelter/organization?****3. What is the age of your current facility?****4. Please indicate the extent that your Shelter/organization serves the following clients:**

|               | Large extent          | moderate extent       | minor extent          | don't serve these     |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Dogs          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Cats          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Small mammals | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Birds         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Reptiles      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Farm animals  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Other (please specify)

**5. Please indicate your Organization's Capacity in the shelter:**

dogs

cats

others

**Please indicate the percentage of animals admitted to your shelter for the following reasons: (% should add to 100% for each type of animal, enter numbers only, no % sign)**

**6. ....Dogs.....**

Stray

Relinquishment

cruelty/rescue

Transfer

**7. ....Cats.....**

Stray

Relinquishment

cruelty/rescue

Transfer

**8. ....others.....**

Stray

Relinquishment

cruelty/rescue

Transfer

**9. Please indicate your Organization's Capacity in foster care:**

dogs

cats

others

**10. Please indicate your Organization's staffing:**

# full time employees

# part time  
employees

# administrative staff

# animal care staff

# medical staff

**11. Does your organization have an external oversight Board?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**12. Does your organization have a veterinary clinic:**

- ☐ Yes - serves shelter and the public
- ☐ Yes - serves just the shelter
- ☐ No

**13. What is your organization's annual budget (including all sources of revenue)**

**14. Please indicate the extent of your organization's revenues from each of the following categories:**

|                   | 0%                    | 1-5%                  | 6-10%                 | 11-30%                | 31-50%                | 51-75%                | 75-100%               |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| City contract     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| County contract   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Donations         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Adoption revenue  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Clinic revenue    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Fund raisers      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Merchandise sales | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Other (please specify)

**15. Please indicate the nature of your organization/shelter (check all that apply)**

- ☐ open access
- ☐ limited access
- ☐ county shelter
- ☐ city shelter/pound
- ☐ nonprofit with contracts with county or municipality
- ☐ nonprofit without contracts
- ☐ operated by a "friends-of model"
- ☐ for profit

**16. What is the average length of stay for each of the following?**

|            | Less than a<br>week   | 1-2 weeks             | 1 month               | Several<br>months     | 1 year                | More than a<br>year   |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| dogs adult | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| cats adult | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| puppies    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| kittens    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| others     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**17. Does your organization/shelter have a mission statement?**☐ Yes☐ No**18. Do you have an organizational chart?**☐ Yes, available to the public, staff and volunteers☐ Yes, available to staff and volunteers☐ Yes, available to staff☐ No**19. To what extent does your organization/shelter engage in the following community-based activities:**

|                                                   | Frequently            | sometimes             | rarely                | never                 |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Have a booth/presence/animals at community events | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Provide humane education to adults                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Provide humane education to children              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Provide tours of the shelter                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Work with community groups for a "day of service" | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Offer camps or events for children                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**20. How successful do you feel your organization is in meeting its goals?**

- ☐ Very successful
- ☐ somewhat successful
- ☐ not very successful
- ☐ not successful at all

**21. Please indicate the three most important barriers to the success of your organization.**

1

2

3

**22. Please indicate the three most important assets that lead to the success of your organization.**

1

2

3

***Shelter Best Practice Survey*****Animal Management/Data Management**

**23. Does each animal get a unique identifier number on intake?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

**24. Is basic identifying information catalogued on intake?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

**25. Is a behavior assessment done on intake?**

- ☐ Yes for all animals  
☐ Yes for dogs  
☐ Yes for cats  
☐ No

**26. How often does the shelter operate beyond capacity?**

- ☐ Never  
☐ rarely  
☐ sometimes  
☐ often

**27. How often does the shelter do each of the following when it reaches capacity?**

|                              | Often                 | Sometimes             | Never                 |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| send animals to foster       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Don't admit any more animals | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Euthanize to create space    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Transfer to another shelter  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Transfer to a rescue         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Other (please specify)

**28. Are there medical and behavioral rounds to inspect each animal daily?**

- ☐ Yes both  
☐ Yes behavioral  
☐ Yes Medical  
☐ No

**29. Please indicate which of the following statistics are kept on each animal:**

|                                    | Yes                   | No                    |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| intake date                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| length of stay                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| disposition of animal              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| behavioral incidents               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| health status                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| description of animal (color/size) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| estimated breed of animal          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| background notes (from owner)      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**30. How frequently are enclosures cleaned?**

- ☐ Twice daily
- ☐ once a day
- ☐ every other day
- ☐ once a week
- ☐ less than once a week

**31. How frequently are enclosures disinfected?**

- ☐ Twice daily
- ☐ once a day
- ☐ every other day
- ☐ once a week
- ☐ less than once a week

**32. Is there a specific order for cleaning by area or nature of animals?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**33. Are hand sanitizers available to**

|                      | Yes                   | No                    |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| staff and volunteers | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| visitors             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**34. Is all food stored in enclosed bins.**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**35. How often are the following feeding methods used:**

|                         | Always                | often                 | sometimes             | never                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| hand feeding            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| bowl feeding            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| through enrichment toys | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**36. When necessary, how is euthanasia performed:**

- ☐ IV injection
- ☐ gas

**37. How often are euthanasia procedures conducted by each of the following:**

|                                 | Always                | frequently            | sometimes             | Never                 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| veterinarian                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| vet tech                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Certified euthanasia technician | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| other staff member              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**38. How is death due to euthanasia verified:**

- ☐ by a Vet professional
- ☐ by a certified euthanasia technician
- ☐ by a vet tech
- ☐ by another staff member

**39. Does the shelter have a transport program to either receive or send animals to other shelters/rescues:**

- ☐ both sends and receives animals
- ☐ yes, receives animals
- ☐ Yes, sends animals
- ☐ no

**40. If animals are received from or sent to other shelters/rescues, are medical protocols in place to check the animals before they come in contact with other animals.**

- ☐ Yes always
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ no

### Shelter Best Practice Survey

#### Infrastructure

**41. What percent of your facility is available for isolation of animals?**

**42. Please answer the following:**

|                                                                             | frequently            | Rarely                | Never                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| How often are animals removed from enclosures for cleaning?                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| How often are animals tethered?                                             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| How often is classical music used to calm?                                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| How often are light and darkness varied according to normal sleep patterns? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**43. Please answer the following:**

|                                                   | Yes, all              | Yes, some             | No                    |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Do cages/kennels have wire mesh bottoms?          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Are floors non-porous?                            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Do isolation areas have separate air circulation? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Do dog kennels have access to the outside?        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**44. What are the dimensions of**

cat enclosures

dog enclosures

**45. Does the structure of the facility allow for the minimization of sound**☐ Yes☐ No**46. Are cat areas far enough away from dogs areas to minimize or eliminate sound:**☐ yes, sound is completely eliminated☐ there is minimal dog sound☐ there is a lot of dog sound in the cat area**47. Is visual contact between dogs minimized?**☐ Yes, No dogs see each other☐ most enclosures do not have visual contact☐ we are not able to minimize visual contact

### Shelter Best Practice Survey

#### Use of Volunteers

48. Please indicate the extent that your organization uses volunteers for the following purposes:

|                                      | Large extent          | moderate extent       | minimal extent        | do not use<br>volunteers for this |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Foster Care                          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Cat<br>comforting/interaction        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Dog walking                          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Dog training                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Shelter cleaning                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Fund raising                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Community events                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Administrative/clerical<br>functions | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Clinic staff functions               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Post-op monitoring of<br>patients    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Humane education                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Grooming/cleaning of<br>animals      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Adoption counseling                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Adoption decisions                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Training of other<br>volunteers      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Behavior testing                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Development of<br>behavior plans     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |
| Euthanasia decisions                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>             |

**49. Please indicate the extent of training your organization does for volunteers:**

|                                        | Yes all volunteers    | Most volunteers       | No volunteers         |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Initial training/orientation           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Apprentice time                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Specific training for particular tasks | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Training updates                       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**50. Is documentation of training kept for all:**

|            | yes                   | no                    |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| staff      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| volunteers | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**51. Do you have the following:**

|                                                    | Yes                   | No                    |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a volunteer board for input to shelter management? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| a volunteer disciplinary process?                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| a junior volunteer program?                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**52. Do you conduct volunteer satisfaction surveys:**

- ☐ yes, on a regular basis
- ☐ occasionally
- ☐ no

**53. Please indicate the extent of turnover in your volunteer base:**

- ☐ high turnover
- ☐ moderate turnover
- ☐ low turnover

**54. How many volunteers does your organization have?**

**55. What is the number of annual hours of volunteered time**

### Shelter Best Practice Survey

#### Dog enrichment activities

56. Please indicate the number of walks per day each dog receives

57. Please indicate the average hours of human interaction per day with each dog.

58. Please indicate the extent to which your organization uses each of the following dog enrichment activities:

|                               | Offer regularly       | offer occasionally or in particular situations | do not offer          |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Individualized behavior plans | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Outside play yard             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Inside play yard              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Agility equipment             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Pack walks                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Co-housing                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Play dates                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Running programs              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Read to Calm                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Trips into the community      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Foster Care                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Prison training programs      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Enrichment toys               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Chew toys                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Behavioral training           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |

**59. If dog training is offered to what extent is it based on the following methods:**

|                         | primarily             | somewhat              | not used              |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Positive reinforcement  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Alpha-dog               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Clicker/Marker training | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Shock training          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Positive punishment     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Lure - Reward           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Compulsion - Praise     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| No training is offered  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

### Shelter Best Practice Survey

#### Cat enrichment activities

**60. Please indicate the average hours of human interaction per day with each cat**

**61. Please indicate the extent to which your organization uses each of the following cat enrichment activities:**

|                                       | Offer regularly       | offer occasionally or in particular situations | do not offer          |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Cat comforting                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Enrichment toys                       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Access to outdoors (controlled space) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Co-housing                            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Communal room                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Places to hide in enclosures          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |
| Scratching posts                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |

**62. Do you have the following:**

|                                                          | Yes                   | No                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a trap neuter and return program?                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| a community cat program for the maintenance of colonies? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| adoptions for FIV cats?                                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| adoptions for barn/feral cats?                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| adoptions/transfer options for FeLV cats?                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |





|                                 | 0                     | 1-10                  | 11-25                 | 26-46                 | 47-67                 | 68-99                 | 100                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Animals too young to be adopted | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Hospice                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**65. Are home visits conducted for potential foster providers?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

### Shelter Best Practice Survey

#### Adoption activities

**66. Do you adopt animals from your shelter/organization?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (skip to question 73)

**67. To what extent does your organization engage in the following in order to boost adoptions:**

|                                                  | High extent           | moderate extent       | minimal extent        | not at all            |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Attendance at adoption events, fairs, pet stores | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Social media                                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Traditional media (radio/news)                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Adopt-a-thons                                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**68. Please indicate the extent to which your adoption fee schedule is based on the following:**

|                                                  | High extent           | moderate extent       | minimal extent        | not at all            |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Flat fee                                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ability to pay                                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Special sales or promotions                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The nature of the individual animals (age/breed) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The nature of individual adopters (seniors/vets) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Length of stay                                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Cost of medical care provided to the animal      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**69. How frequently do you offer discounts on adoption fees based on the following:**

|                                                        | Always                | often                 | sometimes             | never                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Senior animals                                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Animals with health issues                             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Pit bull mixes                                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Black animals                                          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Animals that have been at the shelter for long periods | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**70. How frequently do you charge a premium on adoption fees based on the following:**

|                       | Always                | often                 | sometimes             | never                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| For puppies           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| For kittens           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| For pure bred animals | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**71. How frequently have your animals up for adoption had the following:**

|                                                        | Always                | often                 | sometimes             | never                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Spay/neutered                                          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| A paired adoption with another bonded animal           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Microchipped                                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Dewormed                                               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Basic vaccinations                                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Health check                                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Behavioral assessment                                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Dog or cat interaction if appropriate for the new home | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Adoption trial period                                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Follow-up after adoption                               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Adopter gets full medical records                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Adopter gets full behavior assessment and records      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**72. Do you provide an estimated breed for dogs to potential adopters (on kennel cards for example)?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

*Shelter Best Practice Survey*

Health  
Care

**73. Does your organization have veterinary staff?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**74. If yes: how many of the following do you have:**

paid veterinarians

volunteer  
veterinarians

paid vet techs

volunteer vet techs

| 75. How frequently does your organization engage in the following medical/health care practices |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|                                                                                                 | Always                | Often                 | Sometimes             | Never                 |
| Provide ongoing training for medical staff.                                                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Documentation on all medical care.                                                              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Assess health of animals on intake                                                              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Provide core vaccines on intake                                                                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Use modified live vaccines                                                                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Provide rabies vaccinations                                                                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Have an emergency medical plan in place                                                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Use analgesic and non-pharmacologic pain management                                             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Administer parasite preventive at the beginning of and during animal's stay                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Appropriate grooming                                                                            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Have a disease response plan                                                                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Mark neutered animals with tattoos or ear cropping                                              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Perform a necropsy with histopathology when an unexpected death occurs                          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

### Shelter Best Practice Survey

#### Staff training

**76. How frequently are staff given updated training:**

- ☐ annually
- ☐ quarterly
- ☐ As new training procedures are published
- ☐ Other (please specify)

**77. Please indicate the extent to which staff training involves the following:**

|                                         | Often                 | occasionally          | rarely                | never                 |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| How to recognize pain in animals        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| How to assess adjustment to the shelter | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| How to assess signs of distress         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| How to interact with the public         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| How to interact with volunteers         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Dog handling                            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Cat handling                            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Animal training                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**78. Does your organization have trained animal behavior specialists?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes. Please indicate how many below

**79. How often are the following groups offered grief or stress management counseling**

|                      | Often                 | occasionally          | rarely                | never                 |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Animal care staff    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Administrative staff | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Veterinary staff     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Volunteers           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**80. If you would like to have your organization included in the drawing for the gift cards, please provide the following information:**

|                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Your Name         | <input type="text"/> |
| Your Organization | <input type="text"/> |
| Email Address     | <input type="text"/> |
| Phone Number      | <input type="text"/> |

**Thank You!!!**

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# INDEX

*Note:* Page numbers followed by “*f*” and “*t*” refer to figures and tables, respectively.

## A

ACOs. *See* Animal control officers (ACOs)

Activities and practices for shelter, 67, 99–105, 100*t*, 102*t*. *See also* Best practices in animal sheltering; Shelter traits and activities relationships

adoption

dimensions, 104*t*

practices, 91–95

animal care in shelter, 74–75, 75*t*

animal enrichment, 82–91

cleaning/disinfecting, 75*t*

community relations, 97–99

comparison of reasons

for cats in foster, 90*f*

for dogs in foster, 89*f*

data collection, 71*t*

data management, 70–71

Euthanasia performance, 73*t*

facility attributes, 68*t*

foster care

percentage animals in, 88*t*

reasons for cats in, 90*t*

reasons for dogs in, 89*t*

guidelines, 15

health and emergency

protocols, 76–77

humane ways of addressing

capacity constraints, 73*f*

methods to address capacity

issues, 72*t*

nature/maintenance of

facility, 67–70

population management,

71–74

practice and activity

dimensions,

99–105

shelter infrastructure, 70*f*

staffing and training, 95–96

survey, 251–280

TNR activities for cats, 74*t*

training methods, 85*t*

volunteers, 78–82

Adopt-A-Pet, 201, 202*t*,

216–221, 220*f*, 240–241

interview, 217–219

memorial garden, 221*f*

site visit, 219–221

Adopt-A-Pet Fenton, 177–178,

201

Adopt-a-thons, 91–92

Adoption

conversation, 219

fee schedules, 92–93, 93*t*

practices, 31–33, 91–95, 228

processes, 179

rate, 180–181

services, 145–147, 157

Adult humane education

materials on animal care,

236

Agility training, 83–84

Alpha training, 85–86

Ambitious capital fund

campaign, 203

American Society for the

Prevention of Cruelty to

Animals (ASPCA), 15–16,

21, 29

Animal care, 25, 48–50, 227

in shelter, 74–75, 75*t*

tools, 166

Animal control officers (ACOs),

44–47, 168–169

Animal shelter(ing), 4–6, 7*t*,

21–22, 26, 34, 111, 124,

131–132, 145–149, 161,

201, 212–213, 228–230,

235–238. *See also* Best

practices in animal

sheltering

animal control *vs.* animal

welfare, 11–12

annual report, 249–250

capacity, 153–154, 164–165

case and legal environment,

43–52

local animal control

ordinances, 48–50

shelter licensing and

oversight, 50–52

state guidelines and model

policy, 44–47

case studies, 239–241

clean, 171

confirmatory factor analysis,

16

data, 52–63

traits of responding

shelters, 53–63, 54*t*, 58*t*

design, 21

evaluations, 28–29

facility, 138–139

homeless animals and role,

9–11

improvement check lists,

199–200

check list for continued

improvement, 200

check list for total

transformation, 199–200

inspections, complaints, and

role of state oversight,

237–238

- Animal shelter(ing) (*Continued*)  
 licensing and oversight, 50–52  
 locations, 35–38  
 practices, 12–15  
 qualitative analysis, 17–18  
 recommendations in, 225–228  
   adoption practices, 228  
   animal care, 227  
   animal enrichment, 227–228  
   community relations, 228  
   data management, 226  
   health and emergency protocols, 227  
   nature and maintenance of facility, 226  
   population management, 226–227  
   staffing and training, 228  
   volunteers, 227  
 research focus, 3–9  
 revisiting tale of two aces, 245–246  
 statistical models, 17  
 study limitations/future research, 241–245  
 traits, programs, and activities, 230–235  
   frequency of critical activities, 233*t*
- Animal(s), 111, 161–162  
 controls, 4–5, 11–12  
 enrichment, 28–31, 82–91, 227–228, 234  
 services, 204  
 welfare, 11–12  
   community, 168–169, 187  
   isolation, 154–155
- Apprentice time, 81
- Asilomar Advanced Animal Statistics, 132–133
- ASPCA. *See* American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA); Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)
- Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), 52  
 standard operating procedures, 25
- Association of Professional Dog Trainers, 44–47
- Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV), 15–16, 21, 52
- B**
- “Barn buddy” programs, 173–174
- Barriers to shelters, 138–142
- Behavioral incidents, 70–71
- Best behavior testing methodology, 28–29
- Best practices in animal sheltering, 67. *See also* Activities and practices for shelter  
 adoption practices, 31–33  
 animal care, 25  
 animal enrichment, 28–31  
 check list for recommended best practices, 35–38  
 community relations, 34  
 data management, 23  
 nature and maintenance of facility, 21–23  
 policy and procedures and health and emergency protocols, 25–27  
 population management, 24–25  
 staffing and training, 33–34  
 volunteers, 27–28
- Bissell Empty the Shelters event, 91–92
- Black dog syndrome, 61–63
- “Breeds”, 181, 205
- Buy-one-get-one-free kitten or cat sales, 93
- C**
- C4C. *See* Cat capacity model (C4C)
- Capital Area Humane Society (CAHS), 5, 161, 190–195, 190*f*, 201, 202*t*, 215–216, 239  
 interview, 191–194  
 site visit, 194–195
- Caring-killing paradox, 33–34
- Cat capacity model (C4C), 22–23
- Cat enrichment, 30, 86–87, 86*t*, 87*f*, 155
- Certified euthanasia technician (CET), 73
- Chameleon, 23
- Check list  
   for consistently positive outcomes, 223–224  
   for consistently high save rates, 224  
   for continued improvement, 200  
   for total transformation, 199–200
- Chi squares, 151–152
- City shelters, 115
- Clicker training, 84–85
- Combo tests for cats, 172
- Community  
   community-based cat activities, 101–105  
   outreach activities, 97–98, 97*t*  
   perceptions, 131–132  
   relations, 34, 97–99, 224, 228
- Compassion fatigue, 33–34
- Complaints, 237–238
- Confirmatory factor analysis, 16, 99
- Correlations with shelter activities, 124–126, 125*t*
- County shelters, 111, 113–117, 121, 143–145
- D**
- DAC. *See* Detroit Animal Control (DAC)
- DACC. *See* Detroit Animal Care and Control (DACC)

Data management, 23, 70–71, 226  
 Dearborn Animal Shelter, 56–59  
 Detroit Animal Care and Control (DACC), 3, 6, 51, 67–68, 145–147, 161, 163*f*, 165–177, 167*f*, 170*f*, 201, 239  
   backstory, 165–167  
   interview, 167–175  
   site visit, 175–177  
 Detroit Animal Control (DAC), 1–2, 165–166, 245–246  
 Dog Aide, 168–169  
 Dog enrichment, 30, 82–83, 83*t*, 84*t*, 155  
 Donohoo, Krista (Adoptions and Front of House Manager), 204–208

**E**

Email surveys, 31–32  
 Euthanization, 24, 185–186

**F**

Facilitators of success shelters, 138–142  
 Facility maintenance in animal sheltering, 21–23  
 Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV), 94–95, 192–193  
 Feline leukemia virus (FeLV), 94–95  
 Foster care, 30–31, 186, 206  
 Foster homes, 88–90  
 Foster programs, 237  
 Free inventory management software, 23  
 Fund raising, 118, 121

**G**

Genesee County Animal Control (GCAC), 161, 177–183, 182*f*, 216–217, 239  
   interview, 178–181  
   site visit, 181–183  
 Grief/stress management support, 95–96, 97*t*

**H**

Hand sanitizers, 23  
 Harbor Humane and Capital Area Humane Societies, 240  
 Harbor Humane Society, 164, 183–189, 184*f*  
   interview, 185–189  
   site visit, 189  
 Health and emergency protocols, 25–27, 76–77, 227  
 Heartworm tests for dogs, 172  
   treatment, 207  
 HSHV. *See* Humane Society of Huron Valley (HSHV)  
 HSLC. *See* Humane Society of Livingston County (HSLC)  
 HSUS. *See* Humane Society of United States (HSUS)  
 Humane care, 180–181  
 Humane education, 206–207, 236  
 Humane Society of Huron Valley (HSHV), 2–3, 5–8, 79, 116, 201, 202*t*, 203–211, 209*f*, 240  
   interview, 204–208  
   site visit, 208–211  
 Humane Society of Livingston County (HSLC), 5, 7–8, 120  
 Humane Society of United States (HSUS), 15–16, 21–23, 27, 52, 227  
 HVAC system, 176

**I**

Improved shelters  
   CAHS, 190–195  
   DACC, 165–177  
   GCAC, 177–183  
   Harbor Humane Society, 183–189  
   nature, 162*t*  
   of service area, 164*t*

path to success depends, 195–199  
 range and magnitude of improvement, 162*f*  
 shelter improvement check lists, 199–200  
 word cloud of change  
   at capital area humane society, 198*f*  
   at DACC, 196*f*  
   at GCAC, 196*f*  
   at Harbor Humane, 198*f*  
 Indicators of shelters, 131  
 Inspections, 237–238

**J**

Junior volunteer program, 236

**K**

Kennedy, Renea (Deputy Director), 178–181  
 Kennel neurosis, 82–83

**L**

Lawrence, Holly (Director of Operations), 191–194  
 Licensed animal shelters, 43–44, 225  
 Live release rates, 230–235  
 Local animal control ordinances, 43, 48–50  
 policies, 24

**M**

MacKillop, Terry (Director), 212–213  
 Maddie's Fund, 70–71  
 Maddock, Jody (Director), 217–219  
 Mandatory sterilization process, 179  
 Marking sterilized animals, 76–77  
 MDARD. *See* Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD)  
 Medical care, 145–147, 215–216

Medical services, 76, 76*t*, 77*f*  
 MHS. *See* Michigan Humane Society (MHS)  
 Michigan animal shelter  
   registration application, 247–248  
 Michigan Anti-Cruelty Society, 165–166, 190–191  
 Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), 50–52, 132–133, 136–137, 169–170  
   shelter inspections, 182–183  
 Michigan Dog Law (1919), 44–47  
 Michigan Humane Society (MHS), 6, 53, 163–166  
 Michigan law, 116  
 Michigan Pet Fund Alliance, 180, 203  
 Michigan shelters, 16, 143–145  
 Michigan statute compared to model ordinances, 44–47, 45*t*  
 Microchipping, 145–147  
 Miller, Melissa (Director), 167–175  
 Mixed-method approach, 43

## N

NACA. *See* National Animal Care and Control Association (NACA)  
 NAIA. *See* National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA)  
 National Animal Care and Control Association (NACA), 11–12, 21, 44–47, 227  
 National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA), 44–47  
 Nature/maintenance of facility, 67–70  
 Necropsy, 26–27  
 Nested approach, 43  
 Nonprofit humane societies, 131–132

## O

OLS regression, 155–156  
 Open adoption processes, 31–32, 186  
 Open intake shelters, 117, 121–122  
 Organization  
   models, 15–16  
   traits, 121  
 Owner relinquishment, 10

## P

“Pajama parties”, 205  
 Parasite preventatives, 26–27  
 Path analysis, 153–154, 154*f*  
 PetPoint, 23  
 Population management, 24–25, 71–74, 226–227  
 Positive punishment, 85–86  
 Positive reinforcement training, 84–85  
 Prison training programs, 83–84  
 Private shelters, 4–6  
 “Protective breeds”, 32  
 Public shelters, 4–6  
 Puppies, 163

## Q

Qualitative analysis, 17–18

## R

Rabies vaccination, 172  
 RCAC. Roscommon County Animal Control (RCAC)  
 Refresher training, 79–81  
 Respondents, 167–168  
 Responding shelters, 53–63, 54*t*, 58*t*, 76, 150–151  
   animals served, 59*t*  
   animals sources, 61*f*  
   in shelter, 60*t*  
   average time in shelter, 62*t*  
 Return to owner rate, 180–181  
 Robust transfer program, 25  
 Roscommon County Animal Control (RCAC), 201, 202*t*, 211–215, 211*f*, 214*f*, 222–223, 241

interview, 212–213  
 site visit, 214–215  
 Rural Clinton County, 201–202

## S

SAFER tests, 28–29, 173  
 Save rates, 133–134  
 SAWA. *See* Society of Animal Welfare Administrators (SAWA)  
 Self-Aulgur, Jen (Director), 185–189  
 Shelter activities, 16  
   activities and outcomes, 145–153, 146*t*  
   correlations between data management and outcome variables, 150*t*  
   correlations between euthanasia and outcome variables, 151*t*  
   correlations between facilities and outcome variables, 149*t*  
   barriers to, and facilitators of, success, 138–142, 139*t*, 141*t*  
   check list for recommended best practices, 157–158  
   modeling positive outcome variables  
     average kill rates, 153–155  
     modeling change in kill rates, 155–156  
   outcome variables, 133–138, 136*t*  
     correlations with, 137*t*  
     traits of top 10 highest kill shelters, 135*t*  
   traits of shelters and outcomes, 142–145, 144*t*  
 Shelter traits and activities relationships, 112–113.  
   *See also* Activities and practices for shelter  
   correlations with activities, 124–126, 125*t*  
   highest resources per capita, 128*t*

- hypothetical model, 113*f*  
 resources, staffing, training,  
     and activities, 118–124  
     correlations traits and  
         activities, 119*t*  
     correlations with volunteer  
         practices, 122*t*  
     variable labels, 118*t*  
 shelter resources and staffing,  
     113–118, 114*t*  
 Shelters. *See* Animal shelter(ing)  
 Social media, 91–92  
 Society of Animal Welfare  
     Administrators (SAWA),  
         21, 52  
 Spay/neuter, 201  
 Specialized cat adoptions,  
     94–95, 95*t*  
 Stable leadership, 215–216  
 Staff training, 245  
     for animal handling, 153–154  
 “Staff” functions, 171  
 Staffing, 95–96, 96*t*  
     activities, 79  
     in animal sheltering, 33–34  
 Standard operating procedures,  
     172–173  
 State legislation animal welfare  
     and control, 43–44  
 State-of-the-art facilities, 35–38  
 Statistical models, 17  
 “Status dogs”, 138–139  
 Sterilization, 207  
 Sternberg temperament testing  
     protocol, 244  
 Streamlined adoption  
     processes, 197–199  
 Systematic behavior evaluation,  
     28–29
- T**
- Take-out room, 176  
 TNR program. *See* Trap Neuter  
     and Return program  
     (TNR program)  
 Training, 95–96, 96*t*  
     in animal sheltering, 33–34  
     methods, 85*t*, 86*f*  
     programs, 29–30  
 Transfer programs, 163,  
     235–237  
 Transfer rate, 180–181  
 Transformative change, 43
- Trap Neuter and Return  
 program (TNR program),  
 24–25, 74, 227
- U**
- Urban Ingham County,  
     161–162, 201–202
- V**
- Vaccinations, 201, 207  
 Veterinarian, 166  
 Veterinary practices, 172  
 Volunteers, 78–82, 78*t*,  
     111–113, 142, 155,  
     217–218, 227, 231  
     in animal sheltering, 27–28  
     coordinator, 186–187,  
         206–207  
     experience, 81*t*  
     lack of, 153  
     most and least common  
         volunteer activities, 79*t*  
     training, 80*t*, 216  
         comparison, 80*f*  
     turnover, 122–123  
     use, 195–197, 215–216

# Strategies for Successful Animal Shelters

Laura A. Reese

*Strategies for Successful Animal Shelters* is the first book to assess the relationship between shelter traits, activities, and critical outcome variables, such as live release or save rates. This book provides a data-based evaluation of shelter processes and practices with explicit recommendations for improved shelter activities. Using a survey of licensed animal shelters, case studies, and data on state inspections, complaints, and save rates, this book provides an assessment of the activities, processes, and procedures that are most likely to lead to positive outcomes for a variety of animal shelters.

The book also contributes to community debate around animal sheltering and provides best practices, methods and means to assess local shelters to ensure the highest level of animal welfare. It is a valuable resource for animal shelter professionals and rescue groups, as well as students in disciplines such as animal science, animal welfare, and shelter medicine.

## Key Features

- Offers best-practice recommendations and how they are used in animal shelters
- Analyzes which shelter traits, programs, and activities are most strongly associated with optimal outcomes, including live release rates
- Includes an assessment of future research and activities to optimize animal welfare within shelters

## About the Author

**Dr. Laura A. Reese** currently serves as the director of the Global Urban Studies Program and is a professor of Urban and Regional Planning and Political Science at Michigan State University, United States. She received her PhD in political science from Wayne State University, United States. She has written and contributed to hundreds of journal articles and publications, and has coauthored more than 10 books to date. Dr. Reese has been a board member of the Humane Society of Livingston County, has provided shelter services and research support to the Humane Society of Huron Valley, the Detroit Department of Health, and the Detroit Animal Care and Control. Dr. Reese has provided training for local officials on economic development and for shelter and animal control professionals on dog bite prevention and shelter practice.

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