Lifesaving Programs Definitions

Transfer/Transport:

- Organizations located in areas facing larger numbers of homeless pets can find positive outcomes through transport programs that transfer pets to regions with lower populations of adoptable pets and greater demand. An effective transport program not only reduces the needless killing of pets, but also allows the source shelter to implement sustainable, proven lifesaving practices and help more pets in their own community.

  - Transport can also benefit receiving organizations by expanding the variety of adoptable pets available, attracting more potential adopters, and meeting community demand. However, responsible transport requires careful consideration of its impact on both the sending and receiving communities.

Foster Programming

- By offering a foster program, shelters and rescue organizations can increase successful outcomes for more animals in the community. Some of the benefits of foster programs include:

  - Community Engagement: Fostering helps create a sense of community involvement and showcases the lifesaving impact that community members can have on the organization.

  - Alternative Housing: Fostering provides alternative housing for pets that may not thrive in a shelter environment, such as reactive or shy pets. It also prevents the development of problematic "kennel behaviors" and allows these pets to be marketed for adoption while in foster care.

  - Safety and Comfort: Foster homes offer a safe space for neonates, nursing mothers, sick or injured pets in need of healing, pets with contagious diseases, and animals who have been in the shelter for an extended period.

  - Improved Efficiency: Fostering shifts organizational resources in a way that improves overall shelter efficiency and reduces the workload on animal care staff, allowing them to focus on other critical tasks.

  - Crisis Support and Reunification: Foster programs can serve as a safety net in times of crisis, offering temporary arrangements for lost pets and supporting in-community reunification efforts, such as first-48/finder-foster programs.

Managing and Diverting Intakes

- Shelters were never meant to take in every pet who is lost or homeless. There has always been a need for the community to help, so shelter space can be reserved for pets that truly

have nowhere else to go. Managed intake is the process that helps separate those that need to come in from those that have another safe option.

- In animal shelters, there are animals in the community that do need immediate entry into the shelter. Shelters should "triage" these cases - like an emergency room. Illness, injury, neonatal kittens without a mother, animals facing exigent threat or animals threatening public safety, would all apply. For these animals, shelters (and animal control officers) should support them immediately.

- For animals that aren't in immediate need, "managed intake" systems should be made available. By deferring animals not in immediate need, shelters can a) create time to help find outcomes preferrable to shelter intake and b) ensure shelter resources are available for the animals that need them urgently. Establishing a responsible and compassionate managed intake program is an essential component of a shelter embracing a no-kill philosophy.

Medical Programming

- Best Friends believes that for a community to reach and sustain no-kill status, access to veterinary care and spay/neuter surgeries must be widely available. Across the country, spay/neuter is a critical component of achieving sustainable lifesaving. Best Friends prioritizes targeted spay/neuter efforts based on shelter intake data, focusing on populations where the impact will be most significant. Expanding access to affordable, high-quality spay/neuter services is essential to reducing shelter intake and ensuring more pets stay in loving homes.
- An effective medical program is critical to ensuring the well-being of animals in any shelter environment.
- Proposals for medical program funding may involve but are not limited to: spay/neuter surgeries, vaccines, emergency veterinary care, ringworm treatment, neonate care, and heartworm treatment.

Community Cat Programming

- Our best friends don't belong in shelters. They belong safe and at home. For community cats, home means living outdoors where they're comfortable. Even though community cats may prefer not to live indoors around people, they deserve a safe place to call home where they're free to be themselves.

    - For cats living outdoors, the most effective, proven lifesaving tool is to establish a Community Cat Program, or TNVR program, where the cats are trapped, spayed or neutered, vaccinated, and returned to their home in the community. These programs help control the population of cats and keep them healthy and safe from illness in the community. Community Cat Programs are a proven humane way to manage the population of cats that already exists in most communities, whereas rounding up community cats, bringing them to the shelter, and killing them has been proven not only inhumane but also ineffective. The scope of that round-up would have to be so large, widespread, and quick to make any measurable impact on the

free-roaming cat population that it cannot reasonably be done in any community in America. Establishing community cat programs is an essential component of a shelter embracing a no-kill philosophy.

Pet Retention/Safety Net Programs

- Community-supported sheltering is the simple concept that shelters should be reserved for animals that have nowhere else to go, and by offering support services to people and pets outside of the shelter, we can keep pets with their families and save lives of dogs and cats who do need to come in. It starts with the question "how can we help you keep your pet?" and embraces the idea that people are inherently good and we must trust our community to do the right thing once they have access to the knowledge and resources they need to care for their animals.

    - Instead of struggling with overwhelming numbers of animals entering their doors, shelters and rescues can concentrate on providing resources to those that are in greatest need by engaging in such practices as:

        - Helping people rehome their own pets;

        - Enlisting finders of stray animals to participate in the search for their families;

        - Establishing return-to-field (RTFS) process for community cats and recognizing caregivers as valuable members of the community who deserve support;

        - Changing the role of animal control officers (ACOs) to field services professionals who work with the population on animal issues rather than defaulting to a punitive model;

        - Building robust foster programs to keep animals out of a stressful shelter environment;

        - Expanding on volunteer opportunities, including nontraditional roles like communicating with elected officials on behalf of animal issues;

        - Sharing real-time data, lost and found updates, and other details as part of a policy of public transparency; and

        - Designing programs and policies to be welcoming rather than exclusive, as well as reflective of the community's diversity.

Return-to-Home Programming

- Most dogs you see outside are not homeless. Most who wander are just lost, and you can help them find their way back home! Did you know that 70 percent of lost dogs are found less than a mile from home? And if they're brought to a shelter, they have a 75 percent less chance of returning to their family. So next time you find a lost dog, don't take him to an

already busy shelter. Instead, be a hero to the dog, family, shelter, and entire community—help them find their way home.

- Recent research indicates that keeping a lost pet within the area it was found, rather than transporting it to an area shelter, led to reunification with its owner 51% of the time. This is a significant improvement over the typical return-to-home (RTH) rate at shelters, which averages only 16% (SAC's last report).

- When a Good Samaritan finds a pet, research indicates that 70% of found pets are found within a mile of their home (42% within a block!). Providing Good Samaritans with the tools and resources to reunite pets with their owners in their own neighborhoods is often more effective than taking them across town to the animal shelter. And getting the pets reunited with their owners is undoubtedly the best outcome for them.