CHAPTER 3
Shelter Operations and Lifesaving Programs

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Today, killing homeless pets as a form of population control is becoming increasingly unacceptable to the public. Because of that and for other reasons, more and more communities are working to transform their traditional animal shelters into community resource centers focused on returning lost pets to their families and achieving lifesaving outcomes for homeless pets. Progressive animal shelters operating in this manner also provide medical care to injured and sick pets, and know that pets in their care may have behavior issues very similar to owned pets, which should not automatically result in them being deemed unadoptable.

Many communities are realizing that progressive animal services are connected to social services and community wellness. Pets connect people socially and serve as official and unofficial emotional and physical support. Plus, pet ownership contributes significantly to the local economy.

Additionally, elected and appointed municipal leadership are devoting the same time, energy and resources to professional excellence in their animal services departments as they do the rest of their municipal departments and programs, understanding that these efforts lead to communities that are safer and better places to live overall. Communities that have progressive animal services programs benefit from having positive reputations as both well-managed municipalities and desirable communities in which to live, work, and play.

Animal shelter vs. community resource center

Beginning in the mid-20th century, states mandated local jurisdictions to maintain animal impoundment facilities, primarily for the purpose of rabies control. Today's animal shelters evolved from those impoundment facilities, as the expectations of the public changed from

animals simply being controlled to animals finding help through government services. An emphasis on pet reclamation and adoption programs developed at the same time that pet ownership became more popular in the United States. Domesticated dogs and cats went from living in the barnyard to the backyard to the inside of their owners' homes.

Because pet ownership is connected to overall community wellness, the public's interaction with animal services is evolving from being a "transactional" experience to becoming more of a collaborative relationship. More and more, animal shelters are serving as resource centers for the people and pets living in a community. Historically, animal services departments reacted to crises and workloads as they arose each day. As animal shelters develop into resource centers, there is an emphasis on education, information sharing, prevention, collaborative problem-solving with other government agencies, and partnerships with nonprofits and the community.

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A pet-loving, lifesaving community is characterized by not just the actions (or inactions) of the municipal animal services department, but is also connected to the values and ethics of the community as whole. The expectations, responsibility for saving lives and the solutions lie with the community, nonprofits and municipal leadership at all levels.

Below is an examination of some of the aspects of operations, practices and programs that facilitate animal shelters serving as community resource centers.

Design of facilities

Traditional animal shelters were utilitarian in design, with little to no emphasis on aesthetics, and were usually situated next to refuse and recycling centers on the outskirts of towns and counties. The kennels were designed strictly for short stray holds and weren't meant for longer stays. Today, as older facilities are being replaced, there is a recognition that animal shelters should be attractive, welcoming places that are strategically located in communities, and that have housing for the animals designed to support positive outcomes for them.

While the adoption areas in new facilities have seen great improvement in design and functionality, the intake areas have remained small and stark comparatively. As animal shelters evolve into community resource centers, it is important that the intake areas are designed to allow private (and often emotional) conversations. Intake areas are transitioning from being drop-off "depots" to serving as counseling centers designed to help families keep their pets, solve problems and make difficult decisions when necessary. Some animal

shelters have two separate areas or entrances, one for adoptions and one for people seeking assistance or considering surrendering their pet, which allows privacy and appropriate space for two very different conversations.

Regarding relinquishment of pets, in theory, having after-hours pet drop boxes might make sense, but in practice there are serious risks and missed opportunities. The guidelines of the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) caution that leaving live animals in unattended receptacles for later intake may result in an animal suffering or dying, so ASV considers drop boxes inhumane. Both ASV and the ASPCA recommend alternative arrangements for true after-hours emergencies, such as posting an after-hours telephone number or partnering with an emergency veterinarian clinic.

In addition, when a pet is placed in a drop box after hours, there is no communication about where the pet is from, why the pet was relinquished or to whom the pet legally belongs. (Not knowing where the pet is from means taxpayers could be paying for services for individuals living in a different jurisdiction.) The chance to learn important information is lost, which increases the challenge for animal shelter staff in helping the pet and is a lost opportunity to help families consider a different outcome for their pets.

Hours of operation

Animal shelters should be open at times that are the most convenient for people who need to reclaim a lost pet or would like to adopt a pet. Being open after 5 p.m. on weekdays, and on weekends and most holidays, gives people more access to the shelter to visit, adopt and reclaim lost pets. Being open as many days as possible is a sure way to make an animal shelter most accessible to the community and to increase lifesaving outcomes. The money saved on shorter hours and closed days is spent instead on animal care and the challenges of managing a population of pets who are stressed due to confinement.

Owner surrender is the one service for which shelters might want to restrict hours. Reducing the number of hours for intake means that a shelter can plan for more staffing on surrender days, allowing staff to give more individualized attention to both the animals and the people surrendering them, and giving rescue partner organizations more time to prepare and provide support for incoming animals.

Cleaning protocols

Animal shelters must be clean, not only to maintain a professional environment, but to ensure the control and prevention of transmittable diseases. Cleaning protocols should be developed based on the latest science and information regarding health and sanitation in animal sheltering, and should not be implemented in any way that will cause stress or harm to the pets in the enclosures. An ideal time for cleaning is when pets are outside for bath-

room breaks and enrichment. To assist staff with moving and managing pets for cleaning, all animal services departments ought to have a robust and active volunteer program.

Written protocols and training should be documented and monitored closely to ensure that animal kennels and care areas are kept clean.

Medical services

Pets are often surrendered at animal shelters because of medical concerns or emergencies, so it is important that animal shelters either retain a shelter veterinarian on staff or contract with a veterinarian or clinic to provide emergency care and meet basic medical needs. Once a pet is surrendered to an animal shelter, the pet becomes the legal property of the shelter, so any care and lifesaving efforts are the responsibility of the shelter.

The shelter director becomes that pet's owner-advocate, ensuring that he or she is treated with compassion, that injuries are treated and that basic life-sustaining care is rendered. An animal in a shelter should have every chance at healing and life that a privately-owned animal would have. It is also important that decision-making processes are set up so that the veterinarian and the shelter director can make collaborative decisions about pets who are irremediably suffering.

In addition to lifesaving services, a shelter veterinarian or contracted veterinarian is responsible for ensuring that infectious disease control protocols are followed and all controlled substances are inventoried and secure. The veterinarian also serves in a forensic capacity for animal cruelty cases.

Regarding vaccinations, it is very important that all pets coming into a shelter are vaccinated at intake, before entering the general population, to protect their health and the health of pets already in the animal shelter. Keeping shelter pets healthy makes adopting and transferring to rescue groups much easier, too, and reduces the cost of the care of sick pets. Core vaccines for dogs are distemper (CDV), adenovirus-2 (CAV-2/hepatitis), parvovirus (CPV), parainfluenza (CPiV) and bordetella bronchiseptica. Core vaccines for cats are feline herpesvirus-1 (feline viral rhinotracheitis/FHV-1), feline calicivirus (FCV) and feline panleukopenia (FPV).

Capacity of care

Capacity of care refers to an animal shelter's kennel space, the resources necessary to humanely care for each pet housed in the shelter, and the pace at which animals move through the shelter system. Because animal shelters may find themselves with too many pets and not enough kennel space or the resources to care for them, it's paramount to have an "at capacity action plan" that includes programs and policies to prevent the killing of shelter pets for space management or population control.

The following programs and practices are strongly recommended for animal services staff to be able to handle periodic or routine capacity challenges:

- A volunteer program to assist with care, enrichment and administrative tasks, freeing up animal care employees

- A foster program that includes emergency foster volunteers, to alleviate temporary space crises and create kennel space in the shelter

- A robust social media presence, to alert the community when the shelter is at capacity

- Strong, consistent relationships with the rescue community, for assistance during space crisis situations

- Well-developed media relationships, to help communicate with the community about immediate shelter needs

- Pre-arranged overflow temporary housing, for hoarding cases, emergencies and times when the shelter is at capacity

- Contractual arrangements with boarding facilities and veterinarians, for temporary boarding and the holding of shelter pets

- A "found foster" program, to allow people who find lost pets to temporarily house the pet (with the shelter providing a kennel, bed, collar, leash, toys and food) while the family is located or until space at the shelter has opened up

- Managed intake procedures, to defer convenience surrenders until there is space at the shelter

- The ability to waive fees and run adoption specials when at capacity or when lack of space starts to become an issue

Many of these are described in more detail in the appendices. For further discussion about capacity of care, see the Million Cat Challenge website (millioncatchallenge.org/resources/capacity-for-care).

Budget and fees

Communities expect certain services from their animal services departments, so the latter must be budgeted appropriately to provide those services. To secure additional funding and resources, successful animal services departments partner with the community via "friends of the animal shelter" groups, and seek support from animal services foundations and private foundations. They also collaborate with nonprofit partners and rescue groups to regularly transfer pets to their programs and fundraise for sick, injured or special-needs pets whose medical or behavioral needs exceed animal services' fiscal resources.

Traditionally, most animal services departments have established fees for adoptions, owner reclamation, impoundment, boarding and other services. The thought is that the fees are in place to recoup the costs of services for operating, but in practice, that cost recovery

model is not realistic for recouping operating costs and instead increases a municipality's daily costs for animal care, and leads to animal shelters being at capacity and the death of pets to create space for incoming animals.

If people cannot afford the fees associated with reclaiming their pets, they leave the animal shelter upset, will tell their neighbors and friends, will not adopt from the animal shelter, and won't volunteer or donate. This punitive model creates enemies and adversaries rather than ambassadors and allies for animal services in a community. Punitive measures do not build community trust and collaborative relationships, and fees do not necessarily teach people a lesson.

Many progressive animal services organizations have given animal services leadership the ability and authority to waive fees for adoptions, reclamations and other services when doing so will result in avoiding ending pets' lives prematurely (e.g., when the shelter is at capacity) and will ultimately save the jurisdiction money on animal care and operating costs.

There are hidden costs associated with killing pets as well as missed economic benefits of a pet-valuing and lifesaving animal services department and community. Regarding hidden costs, for example, absenteeism, behavior and performance problems, and staff turnover tend to be higher in environments where staff are expected to prematurely end the lives of savable pets. One missed economic benefit is that the public avoids visiting shelters where lifesaving is not a priority.

Partnerships

Partnerships with nonprofit animal welfare organizations, other government agencies related to wellness, and the business community are vital for finding lifesaving solutions because municipal animal services departments frequently do not have the resources to meet all of the community's needs. Solid partnerships with nonprofits can assist animal shelters with finding resources for emergency surgeries, medical intervention and treatment programs, foster home networks, and behavior assistance, training and funding. For more on this topic, see Chapter 5, "Coalition-Building."

Data reporting and transparency

Reporting all data related to animal services is crucial for building trust between animal services and the community, animal welfare nonprofits, activists and advocates. Being fully transparent communicates the needs of animal services and invites the community to volunteer, foster, adopt, donate and, in general, become ambassadors for animal services.

Some animal services departments are reluctant to make their data available, but being transparent about statistics can be an effective way to get help and support from the community. In addition, it allows organizations subject to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

requirements to control their messaging, rather than letting others drive the conversation through their FOIA request.

It is recommended that shelters report their data on Shelter Animals Count (shelteranimalscount.org), a national database of sheltered animal statistics. For more information, see Appendix O, "Shelter Animal Data Collection."

Communication and social media

An easy-to-use, mobile-friendly website and an active social media presence are vital tools for an animal services department's success. These critical communication tools will work in tandem to keep your community up to date regarding hours, adoption promotions, animal services' needs, emergencies and, most important, opportunities for the community to assist in your work.

These days, there is a very real expectation from the public that your department is using social media to communicate. A large portion of the U.S. population, after all, are daily users on at least one social media platform. Here are four reasons why your department should maintain an active social media presence:

1. It's the fastest and cheapest communication tool. It only takes a few minutes to publish something on a social media site, and the response is nearly instantaneous. The real-time nature of social media makes it ideal for updating your community quickly about new animals available for adoption, recent adoptions, special events or emergencies that require community support.

2. It builds a relationship with your audience, so they can unite around your cause. As long as your community knows you on social media, it doesn't matter if your brick-and-mortar location exists off the beaten path. You can build a strong relationship with your followers by posting quality content that's easy to understand, is visually interesting to consume, and furthers your mission. Social media provides a platform for educating the public about your cause, and also for listening to their comments and questions.

3. It drives targeted traffic to your website, your primary communication tool. You might have the most beautiful, easy-to-use website, but without social media to point people there, few people would see it.

4. It's key to providing good customer service. Your department may not be selling anything, but you rely on the community to help you find families for homeless animals. Everyone is a potential adopter and the quicker you can answer their questions to get an animal out the door, the sooner you can help another animal. Of course, it's not enough to simply post content on your social media page and walk away. Your followers want to engage with you and they expect their questions to be answered in a timely manner.

Breed labels and restrictions

Most pets coming into an animal shelter are either mixed breed or breed unknown. Guessing a dog's genetic makeup has typically been based on certain physical features, but advancements in DNA testing have proven that this is an unreliable way to determine an animal's breed.

Furthermore, there is no genetic connection between appearance and behavior. Prospective adopters who choose a dog based on his or her supposed breed may draw unrealistic conclusions about the pet's personality traits. Conversely, certain assumptions about a breed based on stereotypical behavior may make it difficult for individual dogs to even be considered for adoption. In addition, postings about lost or found pets typically use photographs and information about the pet to help identify him or her, and posting a lost pet's perceived breed incorrectly can make it difficult or impossible for owners to find their pets.

A best practice in animal sheltering, then, is to use clear photographs and descriptive words about a pet's appearance and personality, and avoid attaching a breed name. Many shelters see an increase in adoptions when breed guesses are removed from kennel cards. Shelter software companies are shifting to using the category "mixed breed" for identification and a secondary label that gives a breed guess (unless a dog is known to be a purebred).

Regarding breed restrictions, breed-specific legislation and breed-discriminatory practices fail to enhance public safety and are also costly to enforce. The focus should be on the behavior of the individual dog and the behavior of the pet owner, rather than the dog's breed. In addition, breed restrictions and labeling can have serious consequences in terms of people finding pet-friendly housing and homeowners' insurance, which ultimately undermines the bond between families and their dogs.

Managed intake

A managed intake process can help an animal shelter control the flow of pets through the shelter system and can also result in families finding ways to rehome their pets on their own or even keep their pets. Managed intake involves making appointments for families who wish to surrender their pets for convenience (i.e., it's not an emergency) and giving them self-rehoming guidelines and counseling. Scheduling an appointment gives the family time to find other options, consider solutions that will allow them to keep their pet, or solidify their decision to relinquish their pet.

Pets who have no other safe option, are in harm's way or are injured are admitted immediately, but if a family can keep their pet and come back on a scheduled date, kennel space can be kept open for the neediest of pets coming to the shelter.

Found foster programs (in which the person who found the pet keeps him or her for several days or longer) are another aspect of managed intake. They are very helpful in keeping lost pets closer to where they presumably live and in keeping kennels open for true emergencies. After taking a "found animal" report from the finder and posting a profile of the pet online, the shelter provides the finder with necessary supplies, such as a bed, collar, leash, food and toys. Providing a "found pet" flyer to the temporary foster family for posting in their community and on social media will assist in finding the pet's original home.

For more information, see <u>Appendix E</u>, "Managed Intake," and <u>Appendix H</u>, "Intake Diversion via Pet Retention."

Return-in-field programs

Enforcement and sheltering should operate as one unit providing humane, ethical, reliable and professional solutions for animal-related issues. Having an integrated animal services department prevents confusion and conflict regarding mission, vision, values and policies, which in turn translates to efficient and effective services both inside the animal shelter and in the field.

Animal control return-in-field programs (which seek to reunite lost pets with their families in the field rather than automatically impounding the animals at the shelter) save time and money, and ensure a lifesaving outcome. Statistically, the farther a pet gets from his home, the less chance he has of being reclaimed by his owner. Most animal shelters spend a significant amount of money caring for impounded pets and many are at capacity. A return-in-field program and supporting policies that empower animal control to keep pets in homes can save municipalities money, keep officers on the streets longer delivering more service value, reduce intake and save pets' lives. (For more on this topic, see <u>Appendix G</u>, "Intake Diversion in the Field.") Financial resources previously spent on impoundment can be invested in community-based solutions to keep pets with their families and to assist with the issues that cause people to surrender their pets.

Bifurcated stray hold

A bifurcated stray hold can help maximize lifesaving potential in an animal shelter. A bifurcated stray hold mandates a longer holding time before ending the life of a pet unless that pet is irremediably suffering. It also allows the shelter to adopt out stray pets after a shorter period of time (often day three) and immediately transfer to rescue or adopt out any pet that is owner-surrendered. Shelters may also immediately transfer to rescue any stray pet if it's in the interest of saving the pet's life, and the owner may still reclaim the pet within the three-day holding period.

Cats who are eligible for a community cat program (typically, "eligible" means a cat who is successfully living outdoors, lacks discernible identification and is of sound health) should also be exempt from mandatory hold times when they are being sterilized, vaccinated, and returned to the location where they were originally found.

When considering stray hold time periods, individual communities should look at the data for pet reclamation time periods for dogs and cats at their local shelters. While a longer stray hold period may seem beneficial for people looking for their lost pets, if an analysis of lost pet reclamation data reveals that pets are rarely reclaimed after day three, holding lost pets longer than three days before transferring them to rescue groups or adopting them out only increases animal care costs and the probability of illness and behavior issues related to stress in confinement. (For an example of the text of a bifurcated stray-hold ordinance, see the "Disposition of an Impounded Animal" ordinance in Appendix Q, "Progressive Animal Control Ordinances.")

Temperament assessments and behavior

Formal temperament assessments do not accurately predict how dogs will behave away from the shelter, which means that staff don't have the best information for matching animals with adopters. In addition, these assessments may create a false sense of security and increase liability for the shelter. Rather than expend valuable resources on formal temperament assessments, staff should adopt other methods to gather information to be used for finding the most appropriate outcome for individual animals.

Questionnaires for people relinquishing their pets can provide valuable information. The information-sharing process used in adoptions can be used during pet relinquishments to solicit information about a pet's habits, likes and dislikes, medical needs, diet, personality and behaviors.

Shelter leadership can also use the day-to-day experiences and observations of animal care staff and volunteers who have been trained to record what they've observed. Dog play groups, in-kennel enrichment, foster outings and regular handling by volunteers and staff should form the foundation for evaluating behavior in the shelter, with the recognition that behavior in a shelter environment is likely to be vastly different from behavior outside the shelter. (For more on enrichment, see Appendix K, "Enrichment for Cats in Shelters," and Appendix L, "Enrichment for Dogs in Shelters.")

End-of-life decisions

Rather than make one individual the sole decision-maker regarding end-of-life decisions in animal shelters, it is recommended that a collaborative and consultative process be employed to ensure that all options are being considered regarding medical intervention and

the alleviation of suffering, as well as behavioral concerns. Unless a pet is suffering irremediably and an immediate decision needs to be made, no one staff person should have the authority to order the death of a pet.

A recommendation for the humane ending of a life ought to take into consideration all the shelter staff's experiences with the pet, veterinarian input and observations, impoundment notes, volunteers' experiences with the pet and information provided by the previous owner. Only then should a recommendation be made to the director or manager of animal services. Staff of municipal animal shelters should keep in mind that if they don't have the resources to save certain pets, local nonprofit or private animal welfare organizations may be able to assist with resources and lifesaving intervention.

Animal services departments should have standard operating procedures in place and appropriate training for end-of-life decision-making and euthanasia procedures. There should be a clear written process followed that outlines who is involved and how that decision is reached.

Adoption programs

Animal services should have well-developed adoption programs designed to save as many lives as possible, as well as transfer pets to rescue partners for the same purpose. One of the best practices in adoption programs is to have open adoptions. In an open adoption process, adopters are matched with pets through open dialogue and conversation in a climate of trust, rather than applying restrictions that could dissuade people from adopting from an animal shelter. The goal is not only to move pets into homes and out of the shelter, but to create an ongoing relationship with community members, who will tell others about their positive experience at the shelter, and perhaps donate, volunteer or come back to adopt again.

For more information, see <u>Appendix I</u>, "Adoption Programs."

Volunteer programs

Because progressive, lifesaving animal services is a community value and ethic, involving the community via a volunteer program not only helps with operational needs, it creates ambassadors for animal services in the community. It is important to create, nurture and insist upon a cohesive and consistent culture for animal services staff and volunteers. The behavioral and cultural expectations should be communicated both during recruitment and as staff and volunteers are brought on board and trained. A signed workplace culture agreement should be in place for each staff person and volunteer.

Utilizing volunteers can be vital for animal services departments that don't have the needed resources to care for pets in the shelter and ensure lifesaving options. Properly trained

volunteers can fulfill integral tasks in animal care, customer service, administrative work, social media, pet enrichment, cleaning and emergency management. Until pets coming into the shelter are safe and leaving alive, an organization should focus all its volunteer efforts on live outcomes for the pets, rather than support programs that siphon off resources and energy from the priority of saving pets' lives. Once pets are safe and leaving alive, additional programming for youth, scouts and special events can be added to the roster of volunteer activities.

For more information, see Appendix N, "Volunteer Programs."

Foster programs

A robust foster program is invaluable for several reasons. First, many behaviors that may have been a concern often disappear when a pet leaves the stress of the shelter. Second, a great deal can be learned about a pet in a home that will aid in marketing and finding a permanent home for the animal. Third, pets can be adopted directly from foster homes without ever having to return to the shelter, thereby providing resources for other pets in need. Fourth, when a shelter is at capacity, foster homes allow the shelter to save many more pets, rather than end their lives due to lack of space.

Finally, foster care is an excellent option for the most at-risk shelter animals, such as newborn kittens and puppies, who require 24/7 care. Foster programs should have performance measures tied to lifesaving goals, in particular saving the most vulnerable populations of pets coming into the shelter.

For more information, see Appendix M, "Foster Programs."

Enrichment programs

The restrictive environment of an animal shelter and lack of physical and mental stimulation is stressful for pets. To help alleviate both anxiety and boredom, it is important to offer basic enrichment items and activities. Not only does enrichment help reduce stress and enhance health, but a relaxed and happy pet gets adopted much more quickly.

Most enrichment items (e.g., toys and food puzzles) can be donated and volunteers love to assist with enrichment activities. Creating an Amazon Wishlist, publicizing it and listing donations needed on the animal services webpage is an effective way to get enrichment items and support. Scheduling enrichment activities during daily cleaning can free up the kennel space, making cleaning much easier for both staff and shelter pets alike.

For more on enrichment, see Appendix K, "Enrichment for Cats in Shelters," and Appendix L, "Enrichment for Dogs in Shelters."

Spay/neuter programs

Most states require that pets leaving an animal shelter are sterilized, but communities need to go beyond mandated sterilization for adopted pets. Robust voluntary spay and neuter programs help to reduce the number of homeless pets coming into shelters, so these programs are a core component of progressive animal services. Partnering with a low-cost spay/neuter clinic or a local veterinarian can help make services both affordable and accessible.

Targeting spay/neuter programs to the areas of highest need is an effective way to stretch resources. Many municipalities focus spay/neuter programs on the populations of animals dying in the greatest numbers in their shelters. So no-cost and low-cost programs often target in the following ways:

- Highest areas of intake (which often coincide with lower-income areas that lack access to affordable spay/neuter services)
- Community cats
- Large-breed dogs

Besides a reduction in the number of homeless pets, spaying and neutering has medical and behavioral benefits. Spay/neuter improves the health of pets, reducing or eliminating the risk of certain cancers and other diseases. Spayed female pets have fewer uterine infections and breast tumors; neutering male pets helps prevent testicular cancer and prostate problems. On the behavior front, neutered dogs are less likely to roam and have fewer aggression issues.

The following practices and initiatives can help promote spaying and neutering and reduce the homeless pet population in a community:

- Local veterinary clinics or hospitals can have free spay/neuter days for owned pets. "Friends of the animals" groups and foundations can sponsor surgery slots.
- Spay and neuter outreach can be done in high-intake neighborhoods. Pets are picked up for surgery appointments and returned to their homes for recovery.
- In partnership with a rescue group or nonprofit organization, healthy stray cats can be returned to the locations where they were found after sterilization and vaccination. In shelters, the reclaim rate for lost cats is very low, so shelter-neuter-return programs are lifesaving and allow the shelter to assist sick and injured cats only.
- In addition to free or low-cost rabies clinics, microchips, collars and tags, offering free spay and neuter surgeries on special days once a month is a way to help people in need.

Transfer programs

There are two types of transfer programs: those that transfer shelter pets to local rescue groups and those that transfer shelter pets to rescue organizations located out of the immediate area, sometimes out of state. Transporting homeless pets into communities that have larger human populations and established lifesaving resources in place is sometimes the best option for saving animals' lives. In addition, transporting pets into other communities and states can relieve pressure for the animal services department that does not yet have the programming, policies and resources in place to operate a lifesaving animal shelter. It is important, of course, to ensure that pets are being moved into communities that have proven and established lifesaving practices and policies in place.

Transferring shelter pets to rescue organizations should be done in conjunction with other programs and practices such as these:

- Targeted trap-neuter-return programs for free-roaming cats
- Targeted free and low-cost spay/neuter programs for owned pets
- Animal control practices and local laws that facilitate keeping pets with their families
- A shelter policy of not taking in healthy free-roaming cats
- A social media and website presence communicating about lost pets and encouraging adoptions
- A pet trader ordinance making the selling of pets illegal (unless by a licensed breeder)