



No Kill Solutions

E-Newsletter

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What is No Kill?

There is only one legitimate definition of No Kill. It is a community where:

- Healthy dogs and cats are saved;
- Treatable dogs and cats are saved; and,
- Healthy and treatable feral cats are saved.

Some shelters are calling themselves No Kill if they save all healthy dogs and cats. The fact that a shelter or community is trying to accomplish this is laudable, but it doesn't mean it is No Kill. Saving all healthy dogs and cats is the *first step* toward achieving a No Kill community, not the end goal. Can a shelter or community really justify killing animals with treatable conditions (such as dogs with food guarding, kittens with conjunctivitis, puppies with kennel cough, or a pet with a broken leg) if it takes the title "No Kill community"? It cannot.

Others claim that No Kill is achieved when healthy, as well as sick and injured but treatable dogs and cats are saved. The definition might have some appeal, but it is out of touch with the sentiment of millions of cat lovers who feed alley cats in their communities. If healthy feral cats are still being killed en masse, a No Kill community is simply not achieved.

In short, neither of these positions is ethically defensible. The No Kill movement's break with traditional sheltering is less about saving "pet" dogs and cats and more about focusing on the individual animal. Regardless of whether a shelter takes in 30, 300, 3,000 or 30,000 dogs and cats each year, No Kill is premised on—in fact demands—

fundamental fairness to individual animals.

This commitment is echoed in the mission statement of virtually every humane society and SPCA in the country which claims to cherish animals, enforce their rights, and teach compassion. Yet, these lofty goals can only be achieved if we judge, treat, and devise a plan for shelter animals individually with all the resources we can muster.

In practice, that means that shelters must put in place the programs and services that address the needs of each individual animal who comes through the door regardless of whether an animal is healthy, sick, injured, or feral.

Implicit within the No Kill philosophy is the understanding that some animals, such as those who are irremediably suffering or hopelessly ill, will be killed for reasons of mercy. That much we can all accept. We can also accept that dogs who are aggressive with a poor prognosis for rehabilitation are a direct and immediate public safety risk who cannot be adopted. But that is all we can accept.

The only animals dying in a No Kill community are dogs and cats who are irremediably suffering, are sick or injured with a poor or grave prognosis for rehabilitation, and vicious dogs with a poor prognosis. (This does *not* include shy or non-aggressive scared dogs.)

Nothing short of that is acceptable. And nothing less will do.
