

COUNTERING THE OPPOSITION



**Responding
to the Ten
Predictable
& Recurring
Excuses of
No Kill
Opponents**

A PUBLICATION OF THE NO KILL ADVOCACY CENTER

THE TACTICS OF NO KILL OPPONENTS



“We can never be No Kill as long as the public is irresponsible.”

“There are simply too many animals and not enough homes for them all.”

“Requiring shelters to give animals to rescue groups means putting animals into the hands of hoarders and dog fighters.”

“No Kill causes animal suffering.”

“Open admission shelters cannot be No Kill.”

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, No Kill opponents argued that No Kill was simply impossible. They called it a “hoax,” a “marketing ploy” and nothing more than “smoke and mirrors.” With No Kill success throughout the nation, these claims have lost traction. With an increasingly informed public and the pressure for reform mounting across the country, those who defend killing have evolved their tactics in several ways.

Some of them are adopting the language of No Kill, but not the programs and services that make it possible. Prior to the achievement of No Kill communities across the country, virtually all shelter administrators openly admitted killing for reasons such as lack of space, antipathy to certain breeds, because the cats were feral, the animals had (highly treatable) illnesses like upper respiratory infection and kennel cough, or because the director claimed there were too many black dogs or cats in the shelter. Some shelter directors today would never be so blatant, so unapologetic for the killing. They still kill at an alarming rate, but many are now doing it with a difference. They are falsely claiming they too are No Kill—or very nearly there—and the only animals they kill are “unadoptable.” When one county’s notoriously abusive shelter claimed to embrace the No Kill philosophy, the death rate did not decline; the number of animals they claimed were “unadoptable” merely skyrocketed. No Kill is not achieved by recategorizing animals; No Kill is achieved by actually saving their lives. Others deflect blame, misrepresent what No Kill is, or tell outright lies.

As animal lovers work to overcome the crisis of cruelty and uncaring endemic to animal shelters, the entrenched opposition—both shelter directors themselves and their allies at animal protection organizations—invariably respond to demands for reform with the excuses highlighted on the following pages.

“We can’t be No Kill because we can’t adopt out animals who might injure someone, especially a child.”

“We have all the No Kill programs but it just doesn’t work.”

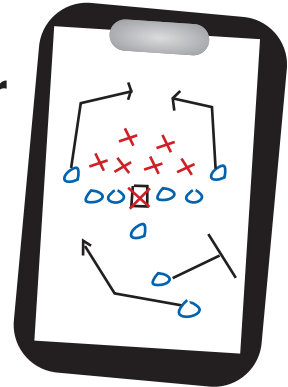
“No Kill is very expensive. Our community cannot afford it.”

“No Kill means animals living their entire lives in cages.”

“No Kill advocates are radical extremists.”

STRENGTHENING YOUR OFFENSE

Overcoming the Predictable & Recurring Excuses of the Entrenched Shelter Director



OPPONENT'S MANEUVER: **DEFLECT BLAME**

Play #1: *"It's pet overpopulation."*

RESPONSE: Pet overpopulation is a myth. Every year, over 23 million people add a new dog or cat to their household, but only three million are killed in shelters for lack of a home.

Play #2: *"It's the irresponsible public's fault."*

RESPONSE: There is still a "public" in No Kill communities. The public did not change, the shelter did. In communities which have ended the killing of savable animals, it is the public which has made the difference in terms of adoptions, volunteerism, donations, foster care and other community support.

Play #3: *"It's too expensive."*

RESPONSE: Not only is there no correlation between a shelter's budget and its save rate, but the programs of the No Kill Equation are more cost-effective than killing: killing costs money; adoptions bring in revenue.

Play #4: *"No Kill threatens public safety."*

RESPONSE: Because the No Kill philosophy does not mandate that vicious dogs be made available for adoption, it is consistent with public safety.

Play #5: *"We tried No Kill. It doesn't work."*

RESPONSE: Half-hearted efforts are not enough. The programs of the No Kill Equation have to be implemented comprehensively so that they completely replace killing.

OPPONENT'S MANEUVER: **NO KILL HARMS ANIMALS**

Play #6: *"No Kill leads to warehousing."*

RESPONSE: No Kill is about valuing animals, which means not only saving their lives but also giving them good, quality care. It means vaccination on intake, nutritious food, daily socialization and exercise, clean water, medical care and programs to find them all loving, new homes.

Play #7: *"Animal rescuers are dog fighters and hoarders."*

RESPONSE: Rescuers do not harm animals, they seek to deliver them from it. By contrast, the first time most animals experience neglect or abuse is at the very place that is supposed to protect them from it: the shelter itself.

OPPONENT'S MANEUVER: **LIE**

Play #8: *"Open admission shelters can't be No Kill."*

RESPONSE: Yes, they can. No Kill shelters can be public or private, large or small, humane societies or municipal agencies. And there are plenty of No Kill animal control shelters and thus No Kill communities which prove it. Something cannot be impossible when it already exists.

Play #9: *"Shelter reformers are seeking outrageous and unreasonable standards for shelters."*

RESPONSE: The programs of the No Kill Equation are reasonable and common sense provisions which most Americans would be shocked to learn are not already followed by every shelter.

Play #10: *"No Kill advocates are extremists working to undermine the humane movement."*

RESPONSE: No Kill activists are regular people from all walks of life, working to expose the hypocrisy between the animal protection movement's professed values and its actions which cause suffering and death. In so doing, they are working to strengthen the cause of animal protection, not weaken it.

#1 “IT’S PET OVERPOPULATION.”

THINK THERE ARE “TOO MANY ANIMALS AND NOT ENOUGH HOMES”?



Until very recently, the notion that pet overpopulation was to blame for the killing of animals in shelters was undisputed, taken for the gospel truth within the animal protection movement. Why? Because it seemed to provide a logical explanation for the killing: generally, shelters impounded far more animals than they adopted, and this was regarded as the result of an imbalance between supply and demand that could only be addressed by decreasing the supply through spay and neuter programs. But what was conveniently ignored all those years were the facts: in reality, there are many more people looking to bring an animal into their home every year than there are animals being killed in shelters. The problem is not too many animals or too few homes; it is failure to compete effectively for the market share of those homes. Rather than adopting from shelters, people are getting their animals from pet stores, breeders, newspaper ads, friends and other places. In other words, the challenge is in getting those potential homes to adopt shelter animals through comprehensively implemented adoption programs and, it is now

THINK AGAIN

understood, forcing shelters to keep animals alive long enough to find new homes.

About eight million animals enter shelters every year. Can shelters find homes for that many animals? The good news is that they don't have to. Some animals need adoption, but others do not. Some animals, like feral cats, need neuter and release. Others will be reclaimed by their families. Some animals will go to rescue groups. Others are irremediably suffering or hopelessly ill and need hospice care or sanctuary. And many can be kept out of the shelter through a comprehensive pet retention effort. While about four million will be killed in pounds and shelters, only three million will be killed for lack of a new home. Can we find homes for those animals? Yes we can.

Statistics show that shelters should be able to find homes for about nine million animals a year with reasonable effort, three times the

In the United States, there are 23 million people looking to bring a cat or dog into their home every year, while three million animals are killed in our nation's shelters but for a home. There are many reasons why animals are being killed in shelters. But pet overpopulation is not one of them. It simply does not exist.

number being killed for lack of a home. In fact, it is more than total impounds. But the news gets even better. There are over 23 million people who are going to get an animal next year. Some are already committed to adopting from a shelter and will already do so. Some are already committed to getting one from a breeder or other commercial source. But 17 million have not decided where that animal will come from and research shows they can be influenced to adopt from a shelter—that's 17 million people potentially vying for roughly

three million animals. So even if 80 percent of those people got their animal from somewhere other than a shelter, we could still end the killing.

Not only does the data prove it, but so does the success of the dozens of No Kill communities that now exist throughout the nation, including communities which take in 20 times the per capita intake rate as large metropolitan areas like New York City.

#2 “IT’S THE IRRESPONSIBLE PUBLIC’S FAULT.”

We have been told that the public is irresponsible and to blame for the killing. But is it true? Even while virtually all other sectors of the economy plummet, purchases for our companion animals increase every year and increased again in 2011 to over 50 billion dollars. On top of the billions spent on their own animals, Americans also give hundreds of millions more to animal related charities. They miss work when their animals get sick and they cut back on their own needs to meet the needs of their animal companions. Evidence of this caring is all around us, but even rescuers too often dismiss it as the “exception”—even when they are constantly seeing so-called “exceptions.” They get letters from people who

adopt animals they rescued sharing how much they love their pets. They see people at the dog park or on their morning dog walks. They fail to recognize caring at the veterinarian's office—the waiting rooms always full, the faces of scared people wondering what is wrong, the tears as they emerge from the exam rooms after saying goodbye for the last time. They don't see that books about animals who have touched people's lives are not only being written in ever-increasing numbers but are often bestsellers because people do care, and the stories touch them very deeply and very personally. They don't see that the success of movies about animals is also a reflection of the love people have for them. And, more



Existing No Kill successes prove that there is enough love and compassion in every community to overcome the irresponsibility of the few.

importantly, they fail to recognize that No Kill success throughout the country is a result of people—people who care deeply. Caring is not the exception; it is the rule.

There are now No Kill communities nationwide. Some of these communities are in the North, some in the South. Some are urban, some rural. Some are public shelters; some are private. Some are in what we call “blue” or left-leaning states and some are in very conservative parts of the country—at least one is in the reddest part of the reddest state. No matter the location, no matter the particular demographics of a community, No Kill success nationwide proves that there is enough love and compassion for animals in every community to overcome the irresponsibility of the few.

Moreover, in those communities which have ended the killing, it is the public which has made the difference: in terms of adoptions, volunteerism, donations, foster care and other community support. So defenders of killing need to put to bed, once and for all, the idea that dogs and cats—animals most Americans

In communities that have achieved No Kill success, the public didn't change, the shelter's own policies and procedures did.



now consider cherished members of their families—need to die in U.S. shelters because people are irresponsible and don't care enough about them.

IT'S THEIR JOB



Animal shelters are supposed to provide a safety net, just like other social service agencies which deal with the effects of human irresponsibility. The difference? The others don't use “public irresponsibility” as an excuse to avoid their obligation to put into place the necessary programs to respond humanely and effectively. Imagine if Child Protective Services took in abused, abandoned and unwanted children and then killed them. We should no more tolerate it for animals.

#3 “IT’S TOO EXPENSIVE.”

With municipalities facing financial pressures across the nation and, as a result, cutting programs and services to their communities, arguing that No Kill is too expensive is a common tactic employed by regressive shelter directors to defray criticism and decrease lifesaving expectations. Yet thankfully, many of the programs identified as key components of saving lives are more cost-effective than impounding, warehousing and then killing animals. Some rely on private philanthropy, as in the use of rescue groups, which shift costs of care from public taxpayers to private

individuals and groups. Others, such as the use of volunteers, augment paid human resources. Still others, such as adoptions, bring in revenue. And, finally, some, such as neutering rather than killing feral cats, are simply less expensive both immediately and in the long-term, with exponential savings in terms of reducing births.

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

Moreover, as most shelter costs are fixed, keeping additional animals alive does not dramatically increase costs. Since it takes roughly the same amount of time to clean a kennel as it does to kill an animal, staff increases often prove unnecessary, with the added financial benefit that cleaning requires less-skilled, less-expensive labor and can be augmented through unpaid volunteer support. Not only do the cost-effective programs that make No Kill possible benefit a municipality’s bottom line, they can be enhanced with the free support of nonprofit organizations and volunteers. In San Francisco during the 1990s, volunteers spent over 110,000 hours at the shelter each year. Assuming the then-prevailing hourly wage, it would have cost the agency over one million dollars to provide those services.

NO KILL MAKES DOLLARS & SENSE



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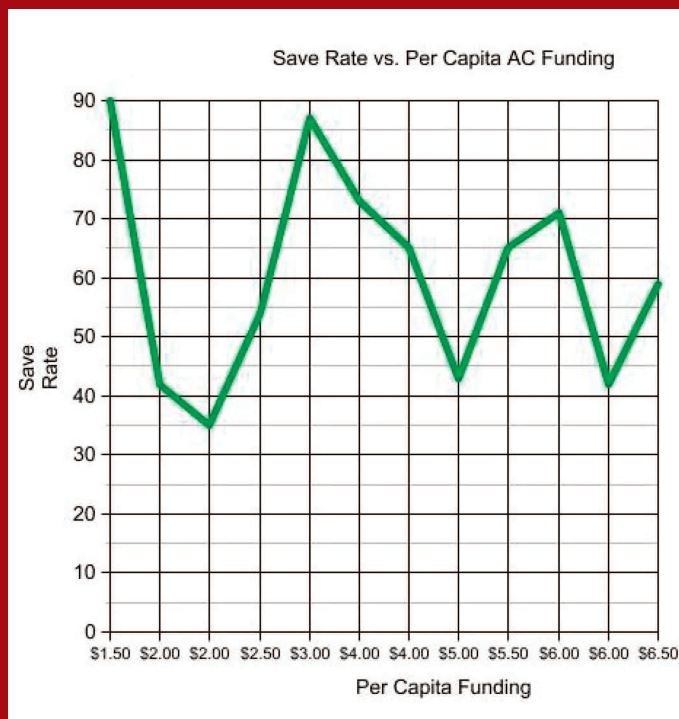
All too often, however, volunteers and rescuers are prevented from assisting by regressive policies in shelters across the country. Even in those communities that allow them, traditional shelters find it difficult to retain volunteers who do not want to work in an environment of killing. By adopting the No Kill philosophy, shelter volunteer rates increase dramatically. In Reno, Nevada, the local humane society increased the number of volunteers from 30 to nearly 8,000 after launching its No Kill initiative. In addition, the number of foster homes increased from a handful to almost 2,500, all of whom help save lives at little cost to the shelter. The services volunteers provide reduce expenses, while increasing capacity and the animals they save are then adopted out, bringing in additional adoption revenue to the shelter.

Before Reno's No Kill initiative, the shelter adopted out fewer than 5,000 dogs and cats every year. The rest were put to death at great cost to taxpayers and donors. In 2010, as death rates declined, the number of animals adopted doubled to just under 10,000. In addition to a cost savings of roughly \$200,000 associated with killing, adoption fees brought in almost \$250,000 in additional revenues. Moreover, the positive impact of economic spending by adopters on those animals to community businesses totaled over 12 million dollars in annual sales. With an average lifespan of roughly 10 years per animal, the total revenues to community businesses over the life of those pets could potentially top 120 million dollars.

The number is substantially higher given that those impacts are exponential (in year two,

Dedication Matters More Than Money

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



businesses would benefit from two years worth of adoptions; in year three, they would benefit from three years of adoptions). In addition, not only do those businesses then employ people who turn around and spend even more, all these activities also bring in badly needed tax revenues. At an average six percent rate, adoptions over a 10-year period could potentially bring in over 20 million dollars in sales tax alone.

While many of these economic benefits will be realized even if people acquire their animals from commercial sources like breeders, cost savings and other revenues will not be.* For

one, the animals will not be sterilized before adoption, requiring the shelter to absorb the costs of taking in the offspring of some of those animals. Moreover, the municipality will not benefit from the decreased costs and increased revenue associated with adopting the animals to those homes. Finally, a successful adoption marketing program not only results in citizens who are more likely to adopt from a shelter, but it can increase the number of available homes as well by inspiring local citizens to feel like valued allies in the shelter's lifesaving mission, thereby encouraging them to open their homes to additional animals.

#4 “NO KILL THREATENS PUBLIC SAFETY.”

When No Kill advocates were trying to reform their local shelter in Illinois, the shelter's director replied that, “We can't be No Kill because we can't adopt out vicious dogs who might injure someone, especially a child.” The fear mongering had its intended effect. Local politicians claimed that though they loved animals, they had to put the welfare and safety of people, especially children, first. It was, they claimed, irresponsible to suggest otherwise. But no one was and the shelter's regressive director knew it.

A No Kill community is one where no healthy or treatable animals are killed. Unfortunately, there are some animals who are hopelessly ill or injured, irremediably suffering or in the case of dogs, aggressive with a poor prognosis for rehabilitation. These animals are often not adoption candidates and, at this time in history, are killed, unless shelters also embrace hospice and sanctuary care. And while many shelters



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

* In addition to the fact that animals are under the constant threat of a death sentence in many shelters, some commercially-sourced animals come from mills which contribute to animal cruelty.

#5 “WE TRIED NO KILL. IT DIDN’T WORK.”

Killing is a choice. It is a choice made by the person who runs a shelter to take the easy, uncaring and inhumane way out. No Kill is also a choice. It is a choice made by the person who runs the shelter to replace that killing with alternatives. Its success is therefore directly proportional to the commitment that is made to it. A shelter director who claims to have tried “No Kill,” but who then sent one litter of motherless kittens into a foster home and the other litter into the kill room, has failed to make the necessary level of commitment required to replace killing entirely. In such circumstances, No Kill has not failed. It offered an alternative, a choice—in this case, foster care—that the director willfully chose to disregard in favor of killing. Likewise, a shelter committed to No Kill does not neuter and release some feral cats while killing others. Other than not allowing them to enter shelters in the first place as some communities have done, TNR becomes the primary lifesaving option for feral cats. A shelter committed to No Kill does not merely allow rescue groups access to animals “some of the time,” but every time a rescue group is willing to take over care and custody of an animal. Indeed, a No Kill shelter actively seeks these groups out.

Unfortunately, many shelters claim they have tried No Kill but that it did not work. This claim is based on the fact that they may have implemented some or all of the programs, but not enough of them or not to the point that they replace killing. In 2004, for example, one SPCA in a city of 1.5 million people conducted roughly 150 free spay/neuter surgeries for the companion animals of the community’s low-income population. The shelter’s director boasted of a low-cost and free spay/neuter

program, but such a token level of surgeries in a large city where one in four people fall below the federal poverty line, will not impact the number of animals entering city shelters. By contrast, another SPCA, in a city with roughly half the population, performed over 9,000 surgeries a year, 84 percent of them for free.

CHOICE



Shelter killing is not an inevitability imposed onto shelters by outside forces. Whether animals entering shelters live or die comes down to one thing: the choices made by the people who run them.

Similarly, animal control in another community allowed only employees to participate in its foster care program. The shelter claimed it was already implementing the programs and services of the No Kill Equation, but it was excluding thousands of animal lovers from participating in the lifesaving effort, seriously limiting how many lives they saved. And a municipal shelter in yet another community boasted of an offsite adoption program, of which they do two a year, less than a No Kill shelter which does seven offsite locations each and every day.

At a well managed No Kill shelter, the size and scope of programs are determined by one thing alone: *need*. Convenience and traditional sheltering dogma that excuse and condone killing are abandoned in favor of both proven solutions that don't, and the flexibility and imagination to respond to extraordinary circumstances with similarly extraordinary determination. Successful No Kill shelter directors maintain a commitment to No Kill even in times of crisis or unanticipated circumstances (such as a dog fighting, hoarding or animal cruelty case that might result in a large influx of animals) with creative alternatives to killing that harness the power of the public's love and compassion for animals. In short, they turn challenges into opportunities, rather than use those challenges as an excuse to kill.

To achieve No Kill success, therefore, a shelter must implement the programs and services of the No Kill Equation not in a piecemeal or in a limited manner, but comprehensively. Shelters must take killing off the table for all savable animals, and utilize the No Kill Equation not sometimes, not merely when it is convenient or politically expedient to do so, but for every single animal, every single time.

THE NO KILL EQUATION

The Programs & Services Every Shelter Should Have

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



#6 “NO KILL LEADS TO WAREHOUSING.”

In February 2007, a Las Vegas, Nevada, shelter that claimed to be “No Kill” was closed down due to filthy conditions and inhumane treatment of animals. According to reports, disease was rampant and sick animals were left to die in their cages. The animals were not vaccinated on intake, healthy animals subsequently grew sick and there was a complete breakdown of animal care. The Las Vegas shelter’s story is one of incompetent leadership, a Board of Directors that failed in its oversight mandate and a director who refused to put in place programs that actually save the lives of animals. What happened in Las Vegas is a tragic example of uncaring rampant in our broken animal shelter system.

Another example of institutionalized uncaring are shelters that recklessly kill the vast majority of animals in their care in the face of alternatives: in other words, run-of-the-mill high-kill shelters such as those that can be found across America. While the mechanics are different, the underlying dynamic is the same: both types of shelters are run by people who do not truly care about animals. The Las Vegas shelter’s “No Kill” claim is irrelevant. In the final analysis, it had more in common with its killing counterparts and the leadership and staff who run them, than those running truly successful and compassionate No Kill shelters.

Conditions at the Las Vegas animal shelter—rampant disease, filth, neglect and animal suffering—do not represent the No Kill movement. No Kill does not mean poor care and abusive treatment, and warehousing animals minus the intentional killing. It means modernizing shelter operations so that animals are well cared for and kept moving efficiently and effectively through the shelter and into homes. The No Kill movement puts action behind the words of every shelter’s mission statement: “All life is precious.” No Kill is about valuing animals, which means not only saving their lives but also giving them good quality care.

Predictably, No Kill opponents seized upon the tragedy in Las Vegas to promote their own agenda of defending an antiquated model of sheltering based on archaic notions of “adoptability,” regressive practices and the premise that animal life is cheap and expendable. They used the Las Vegas shelter to denounce the No Kill paradigm by intimating that the Las Vegas example is the natural outcome of trying to end the killing of savable dogs and cats in shelters today, and they use the “No Kill equals warehousing” argument to undermine shelter reform efforts nationwide.

In fact, roughly 1,000 animals lost their lives at the hands of the anti-No Kill team that came in,

The “No Kill leads to warehousing” argument is a cynicism which has only one purpose: to shield those who fail to save lives from public criticism and public accountability by painting a picture of the alternative as even darker.

Roughly 1,000 animals lost their lives at the hands of the anti-No Kill team that came in, needles blazing, to “help” the animals in Las Vegas. To No Kill opponents, helping animals meant putting them to death.

needles blazing, to “help” the animals in Las Vegas. To No Kill opponents, helping animals meant putting them to death. Today, by following policies that favor killing, that Las Vegas shelter kills many animals without offering them for adoption.

According to the National Animal Control Association,

Dogs and cats linger for weeks, sometime months, in tiny, cramped cages with barely room to move... dogs are rarely walked. They may sit in their own waste because overworked kennel workers hardly have time to clean more than once a day. Cats face a similar fate. Shelter managers can boast of decreased euthanasia rates, yet from the animal’s point of view, is their suffering worth it?

The article ends by asking the question whether it “is compassionate to force dogs and cats to

live their lives in small, confined spaces for weeks or months at a time when their chances for adoption are slim to none?”

The calculus, however, is far from “slim to none.” First, it would be far preferable for an animal to endure a few “weeks or months” in a shelter before moving on to a loving, new home than to be killed out of convenience. Second, these animals are not in filthy, cramped cages at true No Kill shelters. At well-run No Kill shelters, the animals are housed in clean, well-lighted environments, are fed nutritious food, receive good quality medical care, and are socialized daily by volunteers who walk them, groom them, pet them and play with them while they wait for a good home. And they are not waiting weeks or months or even years. At one open admission No Kill shelter, the average length of stay was only eight days and no animal ever celebrated an anniversary there. At another, it is 14 days, roughly the same amount of time as an average stay for animals at a boarding kennel while their families are on vacation.

By denigrating the movement to end shelter killing as akin to warehousing and abuse, and by ignoring the protocols of shelters which have truly achieved No Kill and are clean, well-run and successful, these naysayers embrace a nation of shelters grounded in killing—a defeatist mentality, inherently unethical and antithetical to animal welfare.

#7 “ANIMAL RESCUERS ARE HOARDERS & DOG FIGHTERS.”

Right now, the goals of the No Kill movement are two-fold: to save the lives of animals by reforming our nation’s broken animal sheltering

system, and until we achieve that goal, to get animals facing death in these shelters immediately out of harm’s way. To do the



Rescuers are animal lovers, many of whom have started their organizations after volunteering at their local shelter and realizing that if the shelter wasn't going to do what was necessary to save lives, they would.

former, some animal advocates focus on political advocacy to force implementation of the No Kill Equation at their local shelter or by seeking shelter reform legislation. To achieve the latter, other advocates focus their energy on rescue, saving animals from death row at their local shelter and finding them homes through organizations founded for this purpose.

Unfortunately, too many shelters are unwilling to voluntarily give animals to rescue groups. In 2010, opponents of rescue access legislation in New York argued that allowing animal rescue groups to save animals on death row in New York State shelters would mean placing them in the hands of dog fighters and hoarders. It was an argument that the

opposition to shelter reform bills in other states used the following year to dissuade legislators. And in Minnesota, it was the main claim made by regressive shelters which coordinated opposition to that state's shelter reform bill, even going so far as to spend donor funds to hire a public relations firm to promulgate this view. In Virginia, Florida, Georgia and elsewhere, efforts to empower rescue groups to save the animals shelters are intent on killing have been defeated using the same arguments.

Animal hoarding, however, is the result of mental illness and is not as common as many animal protection organizations would have us believe. Psychologists estimate that only two percent of the population suffers from hoarding, and of those, not all of them "collect" animals—many collect inanimate objects. And only four percent of animals in shelters are there because of abuse or dog fighting. By contrast, an animal at an "average" shelter has a 50 percent chance of being killed. In places like Montgomery County, North Carolina, the odds are more extreme: 99 percent of animals are killed. And because rescue groups generally only save those animals scheduled to be killed, there is a 100 percent chance the animal will die without them.

To suggest that we must protect animals from rescuers is backward thinking. If we care about saving animals, we must save them from *shelters* by putting them in the hands of *rescuers*. Moreover, logic and fairness—both to rescuers and the animals—demand that altruistic people who devote their time and energy to helping shelter animals stop being equated with mentally ill people who cause them harm.

Shelter killing is the leading cause of death for healthy dogs and cats in the United States.

In the end, it is not hoarders or dog fighters or cruel people who are responsible for the greatest harm to befall healthy dogs and cats in this country. The number one cause of death for these animals is the local shelter. To truly protect animals, the mandate is clear: *get them out of shelters.*

#8 “OPEN ADMISSION SHELTERS CANNOT BE NO KILL.”

No Kill shelters can be public or private, large or small, humane societies or municipal agencies. But national organizations routinely mislead people that so-called “open admission” animal control facilities cannot be No Kill: “A no-kill shelter really can’t have an open admission policy. It must limit its intake if it wants to adopt out animals and not kill them.” This is false. A No Kill shelter can be either “limited admission” or “open admission.” And

there are plenty of No Kill animal control shelters and thus No Kill communities which prove it.

An “open admission” shelter does not have to—and should not—be an open door to the killing of animals. In addition, using the term “open admission” for kill shelters is misleading. Kill shelters are *closed* to people who love animals. They are *closed* to people who might have lost

YES! “Open admission” shelters *can* be No Kill.

NO! “Open admission” does not mean “more humane” when the end result is killing.

their job or lost their home but do not want their animals to die. They are *closed* to Good Samaritans who find animals but do not want them killed. They are *closed* to animal lovers who want to help save lives but will not be silent in the face of needless killing. And so they turn these people and their animals away, refusing to provide to them the service they are being paid to perform.

Ironically, kill shelters are so enmeshed in their so-called “open door” philosophy that they are also blind to any proactive steps that might limit the numbers of animals coming in through those doors, like pet retention programs, or that might increase the numbers of animals adopted, like comprehensive marketing campaigns. “Open door” does not mean “more humane” when the end result is mass killing.

#9 “SHELTER REFORM EFFORTS ARE UNREASONABLE.”

Shelter reform laws mandating the No Kill Equation already exist, in part, in states such as California and Delaware, in local communities such as Austin, Texas, and have been introduced in Virginia, Florida, Minnesota, Rhode Island, Texas, Georgia, New York and elsewhere. One of the key tools No Kill opponents use to defeat such laws is to lie about what the bills require. Their goal is to make such laws appear unreasonable and a threat both to public safety and the animals themselves.

Although in places where these laws are already in effect, lifesaving has increased and none of the predicted fears have come to pass,

that has not stopped the opposition from repeating their claims over and over again. In New York, a rescue rights law was opposed on the grounds that it would have threatened public safety by mandating the release of dangerous animals, even though the legislation specifically excluded dogs who have been deemed dangerous or had a history of vicious behavior. Although the bill specifically excluded people who have been convicted of animal cruelty to qualify for rescue and allowed inspections of rescue groups, they stated that the law would have forced shelters to give animals to animal abusers.



No Kill opponents work to defeat shelter reform and rescue access laws by lying about their requirements. Their goal is to make these important laws which mandate simple, common sense procedures appear unreasonable and a threat both to public safety and the animals themselves.

One shelter director opposed to shelter reform legislation in Florida went so far as to claim that the bill pending in that state was unfair to rescue groups because it required those rescue groups to take animals from shelters at their own expense even if they did not want to. Of course, the legislation did no such thing. Such a law would be unconstitutional and illegal. But

these false claims had their intended effect, and in both cases (and others), legislators—even well-meaning legislators who love animals and thought they were doing the right thing because these groups, in their minds, represented the best interests of animals—listened to these “experts,” believed their misrepresentations and opposed the laws.

#10 “NO KILL REFORMERS ARE EXTREMISTS.”

It is an age-old story: if you can't attack the message, attack the messenger. When animal lovers try to reform their local shelters, these shelters—and the animal protection groups which defend them—often create a distraction by arguing that No Kill activists themselves are harming animals by criticizing the groups which help them. No Kill opponents have a history of referring to people who want to reform deplorable sheltering practices as “divisive” and asserting that such people hurt animals by creating strife and fostering discontent within the animal protection movement.

Other opponents tell their followers that No Kill activists are not really animal lovers at all, but people with a hidden, secret agenda to destroy the animal rights movement.

These groups, as well as shelter directors under scrutiny in their own communities, frequently respond to concerns about their own sordid actions by arguing that everyone should work together to defeat “our common enemy”—those who exploit animals. What this argument conveniently ignores, however, is that in causing the needless killing and suffering of animals in



shelters, *they* are the enemy. To fail to take them to task, therefore, is to abandon the cause of No Kill itself. It is to admit and accept defeat and to condone the unending slaughter of innocent animals who can and should be saved.

Moreover, their argument ignores that movements for social justice are not about organizations or the individuals who work at them. They are, first and foremost, about ideals. Authentic and effective advocates are duty-bound to recognize that it is not *who* is right, but *what* is right and orient their advocacy

It is not *who* is right, but *what* is right that matters. Standing up to those who claim to be “friends” of animals but in reality defend their killing and work to thwart the reform that would end it is the only way the animal protection movement can ever reach its fullest potential.

accordingly, regardless of what label an organization may claim: SPCA, humane society, shelter or animal rights group. Indeed, standing up to those who claim to be “friends” of animals—the very shelters and animal protection organizations that kill, defend the killing and are working to thwart the reform that would end it—is the only way the No Kill movement can ever hope to fully succeed, and the only way the animal protection movement as a whole can ever reach its fullest potential.

For in practicing and condoning shelter killing, the animal protection movement opens itself up to valid censure for its own hypocrisy. Right now, there is a double standard within the animal protection movement, one that (rightfully) condemns the abuse and killing of animals, except (wrongfully) when that abuse and killing occurs in our nation’s shelters. This position weakens the movement’s credibility and gives those who exploit or kill animals in other contexts a convenient means of deflecting criticism. Moreover, it blinds activists to the important gains that could be easily made for all animals through No Kill if only the animal

protection movement stopped getting in its own way.

Today, not only do we have a solution to shelter killing, but we also have an American public ready and willing to make it happen. Through the No Kill movement, we can create a country in which it is illegal to kill animals who enter shelters. We can create a country in which children are raised with higher expectations for the treatment of animals—and an understanding and acceptance that animals have legal rights. And we can establish powerful advocates for the well-being of animals in every community by reclaiming the thousands of shelters across our nation, and reorienting them away from killing and back to their founding missions: to advocate for and save animals.

In failing to fully exploit this stunning potential, we are failing all animals who would benefit from the powerful legal, philosophical and societal precedents the animal protection movement could realize through the achievement of a No Kill nation. Yet we are prevented from harvesting this low-hanging fruit by the very groups who should be leading the charge to reap it.

In the end, those who defend the paradigm of killing are betraying not just animals in shelters, but the entire animal protection movement and by extension, all animals in need of effective advocacy. They are the ones harming the animal protection movement, not those who are seeking ethical and philosophical consistency and all the benefits that would come of it.

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