Keeping Pets In Homes: Investing in Prevention

Betsy McFarland, Vice President, Companion Animals
Our Goal

• To end euthanasia in shelters.

• To keep pets with their families; healthy and happy throughout their lives.
Shelter euthanasia down from 15 mil to 3 mil thanks to spay/neuter

3 million more to save....reasons more complex
Landlord issues
Too many litters
Too expensive
Behavior problem
Lack of s/n services
Allergies
Litter box issues
Think Outside Shelter Walls
What causes pets in your community to lose their homes?
Problems finding housing; landlord issues

Can’t afford veterinary and other pet care

Behavior problems
Housing Challenges
35% of US households rely on rental housing (~30 million pets) and it’s on the rise.
Have you tried renting with a pet?

**Pet Friendly?**
- Size limits
- Breed restrictions
- Number limits
- Age limits
- Monthly pet fees
- Non-refundable deposit
Economic Realities...

- 50% of families earn $60,000 or less per year & 50 million Americans live in poverty
- 2.6 million households live in either public or subsidized housing (nearly 2 million pets)
“Hi. I'm calling because I've been evicted. I don't know what to do. I have my dog at an abandoned house down the street while I stay at my friend's. Can someone call me back please?”

“Hi. I was just at my house... There's no heat or electricity there and we're staying with someone so my kids can go to school. But we'll be back there soon. Unless they tear it down... Can you help me?”

“Thank you for calling back. I try to get back to my old house. It takes three hours by bus. I go every other day. Can you help with food?”

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No dogs allowed: San Francisco's pet housing crisis

The housing crunch in San Francisco isn't just forcing out lower income renters, it's forcing out Fido, too.
People Are Unfairly Forced To Leave Their Dogs At Shelters. Now There's Help.

“She's determined to keep her family together, but money is tight, and affordable rentals are excruciatingly hard to come by. With two blocky-headed dogs in the equation, finding housing becomes nearly impossible. To make the search easier, she could surrender her pets to the city shelter — a notion, at this point, she can't bear to think about. But in a month, when the garage is no longer available, Veronica may be forced to confront the unthinkable.”
How Can YOU Make Your Community Pets Are Welcome?

- Empower renters and help them understand their rights
- Share information to help them be model tenants
- Show property managers that removing pet restrictions increases revenue and saves lives
Pets Are Welcome
Housing issues should never cost pets their homes

Did you know that 72 percent of American households that rent their homes have pets?

Pets are a part of nearly every community, yet renters often have trouble finding housing that welcomes their pets. In fact, problems finding or keeping housing are a leading reason pets end up homeless.
Affording Veterinary Care
Pet Owner Realities

23 million pet in poverty, plus millions more struggling.

Veterinary costs continue to rise, making routine care out of reach for most.
Veterinarian Realities

• Huge debt loads out of school

• “State of the Art” diagnostics and treatments are expensive, and every vet clinic must be self-contained

• Demand for vet care should be inelastic
How the ravages of inequality fall on the pets of the poor: “We’re putting people in a Catch-22”
Small Changes = Huge Impact

- Access to affordable (and free!) Desexing
- General Deworming
- Access to Flea Meds vs. Flea Collars
- Information about OTC meds and home remedies
- Feeding Guidelines (bones, supplements)
- Information about common diseases and prevention
What Investing in Prevention Looks Like
Behavior Issues
Perception of cats...
Reality of cats...
Cat Behavior

- Stole food off the table
- Stopped using litter box
- Fought with other cat
- Scratched furniture
When you return Cynthia’s call, what are you going to focus on?

A. Giving her options of where to surrender her cat
B. Telling her that she has no business being a cat owner if she’s going to get so angry with her cat.
C. Empathizing with her frustration and engaging her in conversation to see if the behavior issue can be resolved.
D. Telling her that it’s no big deal when a cat pees in the sink and what’s she so worried about.
C. Empathizing with her frustration and engaging her in conversation to see if the behavior issue can be resolved.

Empathy with Client

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Productive Conversation
Problem:
Demoralized cat owner who is at her “wit’s end”

Response:
• Lend her hope
• Remind her that she loves her cat
B. Telling her that she has no business being a cat owner if she is going to get so angry with her cat.
When Speaking to Clients
Keep in Mind . . .

• Clients often call in crisis mode.

• We all get frustrated at times.

• This may be one of several stressors.

• They are calling for help of some sort and care about their pet.
“Behavior problems are often made worse because cat owners misunderstand the underlying cause and assume the misbehavior is deliberate. If you take nothing else away from this [class], please remember that no cat deliberately and willfully tries to misbehave. Your cat is facing a problem and attempting to solve it according to what he knows as a cat.”

Pam Johnson-Bennett
“Starting from Scratch”
Cat Trainings

Want to get more involved in helping cats in your community but not sure where to start? Look no further. Animal Sheltering has compiled all of the latest trainings right here.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Keeping Cats in Homes Webinar Series
This series is designed to help you learn more about cat behavior, become an effective counselor, increase cat relinquishes and even start a behavior hotline.

Rethinking the Cat Symposium
In those daylong trainings, learn the latest programs designed to help community and owned cats through boosting adoptions, reducing population, and keeping cats in loving homes.

Supporting Community Cats Webinar Archives
Learn how to best help outdoor cats, increase your TNR efforts, collaborate with wildlife conservationists, and more with this archived series.

Cat Behavior and Retention Course
This online, ten-week course trains participants to be successful in efficiently resolving cat behavior challenges, as part of a proactive community based effort to keep cats in their homes, and includes materials and case studies from leading experts in cat behavior and retention.

www.animalsheltering.org/cattrainings
Putting it all together...

Putting the pieces together...
St. Hubert’s Pet Helpline

973-377-2253

Having behavioral problems with your pets? We can help.
Josephine and Lucy

North Central Shelter Intervention Program (NCSIP).
OVER 4,000 PETS PREVENTED FROM ENTERING THE SOUTH LA SHELTER

Since April 2013

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SERVICE PROVIDED TO PET OWNERS BY TYPE:

- 23% Could Not Afford Pet
- 52% Spay/Neuter
- 7.6% Housing
- 6% Humane Euthanasia
- 6% Rescued/Rehomed

4,021 PETS INTERCEPTED SINCE PROGRAM INCEPTION ON APRIL 6, 2013
Things to remember....

• Be proactive.
• Pick the right people.
• Sometimes the answer is for the pet to come to the shelter, but in many cases there are alternatives.
• Be as compassionate to people as you are to animals.
• Try to look at situations through their eyes.
Tips for Togetherness

• Listen.
• Be nonjudgmental.
• Practice empath
• Use your powers of persuasion.
• Focus on the three Es (educate, encourage, enable)
“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.”
- Aesop
THANK YOU!