



Colorado Animal Shelter Data Trends 2000-2013

Discussion Group

April 13, 2015

Attendees:

Duane Adams, Dumb Friends League

Erica Elvove, Institute for Human-Animal Connection

Roger Haston, Animal Assistance Foundation

Ralph Johnson, CVMA/PetAid

Tobie McPhail, Morris Animal Foundation

Kevin Morris, Institute for Human-Animal Connection

Patty Olson, DVM

Apryl Steele, Dumb Friends League

Julie Wolf, Novella Clinical

1. Welcome from Philip Tedeschi & Introductions
2. Data is yet to be validated, will be crosschecked with Julie's suggestions
3. Meeting notes will be published on IHAC website and referenced in the publication
4. 100 or so shelters consistently recorded, but it's become a smaller % of the overall population in the state. So, data has been adjusted by total intake. Around 80%. A few have dropped out or closed, but still utilizing data from the biggest shelters in the state.
5. DOGS
 - a. "Taken In" includes every animal taken in by the shelters; clarifying language on page 2 of discussion packet.
 - b. Improvements on outcomes for dogs
 - c. Final value? **Linear regression tables**- P-value, final value is the slope X numbers of years, added or subtracted from the . Predicted value for that change.



- d. 2010-2013? What happened? Sharp drop in the trend. What did we see?
- e. RTO's down; euthanasias are down, transfers up. So why is this happening?
- f. Why are intakes down? (Kevin) Roger: picked off the strays- affluent neighborhoods are improved, for example, since they are tagging. But you might see differences in lower SES neighborhoods. Better education, microchip, collar/tag, in more affluent communities. Lower SES and people with less access to resources aren't seen as much and could be affecting RTO rate. The effects of microchipping are difficult to parse out. Some come in with a chip and their owners are contacted before they're even counted as an intake or RTO.
- g. Kevin: in the last study, RTO rates were higher in the rural counties. They all knew each other, for example.
- h. Julie: RTO came down since 2007, though.
- i. Duane: Denver Stray Project (Strays sent back to original jurisdiction to try to increase the likelihood of finding owners/pets) increased RTO percentage and lowered stray dogs coming in to shelter. Looking at the numbers combined, it has dropped the RTO rate. Kevin: this is one of the detriments of not having broken-down intake subcategories. Location makes a huge difference. Animal control is also dropping pets off with specific owners- not included in these numbers.
- j. RTO- is it because there are fewer coming in? Strays have dropped off...
- k. There is a transfer discrepancy for multiple transfers that is addressed in the methods section.
- l. Apryl: Why are intakes down? Spay/neuter and community awareness have been effective. No-kill shelters have an impact, because they bounce/refuse animals? Especially in rural counties which may be less welcoming to taking the animals in.



- m. Duane: DDFL has seen a big drop in strays taken in. Kevin: could the internet be affecting the connections
- n. Roger: Boulder was tracking the number of animals viewed, but it's become problematic because the number of views has gone up dramatically. People used to visit with 1 or 2, but now they do internet research and want to see 5-6 animals before selecting one for adoption.
- o. Duane: If you're watching your live release rate, deaths are not influential, but euthanizing is. Bottle baby kittens tend to die more often (medical interventions are up, they are trying harder), but used to be euthanized, so this is affecting results. High success with Parvo treatment, but sometimes shelters have waited too long. They may transfer or try to help at a higher rate, rather than euthanasia. Many shelters in CO now have substantial medical treatment clinics for animals that would have been euthanized a few years ago. Behavioral training programs are resulting in more permanent adoptions too.
- p. Roger: Growth of rescue organizations, some report but some do not. Are they below the report number and therefore not included? Could these small programs be affecting the overall intake rates?
- q. Kevin: What could account for the lowering euthanasia rate?
 - i. Apryl: more resources, more capacity, a lot of work being done.
 - ii. Roger: ratio between adoptions and euthanasia rates
 - iii. Patty: we don't know if that's a steady accounting of the numbers, is there another consideration?
 1. Kevin: in 2000, this was 95%, last year was about 80%, so there are more groups, but they are included
 2. Duane: Yes, it has an impact on DDFL's intake numbers
 3. Julie: This is still a good, informative sample.
 4. Roger: 2007 on, pulling out of state, in state numbers drop. Capacity starts to fill with out of state transfers.



- iv. Roger: It really looks flat, overall. I would think intake would have gone down. Maybe geographically you would see patterns?
- v. Kevin: But the non-metro areas are really sparse.
- vi. Roger: Was it across all shelters from 2011-2013? Or was it one/two major shelter diversion? Skeptical that it could solely be spay/neuter.
- vii. What are the major trends in dogs? (Kevin)
 1. Mandatory chipping?- Patti
 - a. No- too expensive. And the effects are surprisingly difficult to track.
 2. Treating more behavior issues (Apryl), but we may see more safety issues because of incidents involving high-risk dogs/adoptions.
 3. Roger: We may need to consider tightening the s/n deposit at adoption, or perhaps drop it all together. There is a high rate of forfeits, especially at the puppy rescues.
 4. Euthanasia, have we gone too far? May they go back up? (Ralph)
 5. Out of state transfers are highly adoptable, this may be affecting the adoption rates. Competition like Craigslist- seems like dog ownership has stayed flat in shelters, but may be spread across.
 6. How is the internet affecting this? (Kevin)
 - a. We know they are not as healthy, monitored, don't know what the homes look like; It's good and bad for the animal community. But it's outside the mainstream and it's unmonitored.
 - b. Maybe it will help increase personal responsibility (Apryl)



- c. Where are these “puppy-rescues” coming from? Is it enabling the issue? 501c3’s, but not listed as shelters (not open-admission). Commercially bred, then transferred in and “rescued”. Saavy internet sites.
- d. Roger/Apryl: Some animals will be accounted for twice or more, due to multiple transfers, then adoption. Could we pull out the intra-transfers?
- e. Maybe we pull the more concrete, like euth.
- f. Roger: Overall, the trends are good. Adoptions doing well, euthanasia is down.
- g. Kevin: Compared to other states, Colorado is doing well. Other states are trying heroically, with lowering outcomes.
- h. Prison programs? Still tied to the shelter of origin.
- i. Roger: De-bias the data by looking at the trends with the out-of-state transfers pulled out? Out of state data transfer is getting bigger and bigger.
 - i. Julie: The total intake number is affected, but once they hit a shelter in state, they are accounted for and shouldn’t change the transfer rates.
 - ii. Want to know if the overall trend for CO dog population in shelters is down. (Out-of-state transfers in being excluded.)

6. CATS

- a. Euthanasia is way down
- b. Has capacity greatly increased for cats?
 - i. No
 - ii. Shelters just aren’t taking them in anymore.



- iii. 29% and 16% Cats RTO at DDFL.
- iv. Are people keeping them inside more? No.
- v. People may not want to bring their cats to shelter because the perception is they will be auto-euthanized. (Roger)
- vi. Duane: Many shelters do actually do that, unless there is a non-euth. waiver signed. This could be skewing the results because the reporting is different for non-euthanizing. If you leave a cat with no connection, it's an owner-release euthanasia.
- vii. Apryl: At DDFL, don't turn them away, but they are sometimes feral. But we're not letting them reproduce in the environment. They are more likely being turned away at the door. Many just won't take cats.
- viii. Kevin: many city ordinances ignore cats
- ix. Duane and Roger: It's changed dramatically since 2000, where animals were accepted anywhere in no-kill or limited-admission. For the cat data, it's essentially driven by policy and cultural fear of euthanasia.
- c. What about population control efforts? (Ralph). We are looking at major numerical differences.
 - i. Various: The previous findings influenced more resources being focused on cats for s/n as well as other programs.
 - ii. Roger: Again, the low SES neighborhoods have lower rates of spay/neuter. Differences have been made in pockets, but the same "breeders" are out there. The E rate dropped so quickly, it must be political. The intake may be masked in some way.
 - iii. Apryl: How many do we need to spay/neuter in Denver to make an impact?
 - a. Roger: maybe 20,000? We're at about 8,000.
 - iv. We don't know the health of the cats in CO or the actual numbers.



- a. We can't really prove the actual numbers
 - b. Roger: What I know is that the intake drops and the euth. drops, to focus my efforts, I have to address the community issues. The shelters are not necessarily solving the issues- but the communities are intrinsically doing so.
 - c. Duane: What are these other groups categorizing their outcomes as?
 - d. TNR: Trap/neuter/release: Would not be tracked as intake/outcome. These are the feral cats.
 - e. SNR: Stray cats brought in, spay/neuter/return. A group returns them. Intake is intake. Outcome is classified as either placement or RTO, most likely RTO.
 - f. CO Springs is tracking these as new categories. Could we survey the shelters to see how they are categorizing?
 - g. RTO's might be categorized as SNRs, driving the trends we are seeing as they are further.
 - h. Cat adoptions are flat, in the short-term this may not be the answer (Roger)
 - i. Apryl: maybe that's the future trend though.
 - ii. Cats stay about 3X longer than dogs at shelters.
- d. Kevin: No kill movement for cats?
1. Yes, on the intake side (Roger)
 - a. Social attitudes towards cats? Marketing campaigns seem to be driving attitudes on this.
 - b. Julie: keep in mind these are speculative...



2. Apryl: Changing the public is so challenging, is this really accounting for the change in numbers that are so high? Boulder is going down and so is Pikes Peak and they are open admission
3. Roger: Shelter policies (not taking them in)
4. Climate change? The pattern of cats health and ability to reproduce?
5. Public perception
6. The no-kill effort is heading in the right direction.
7. Kevin: Have there been any major disease outbreaks in the cat shelters that might drive increases in the “died” category. Apryl: None reported.