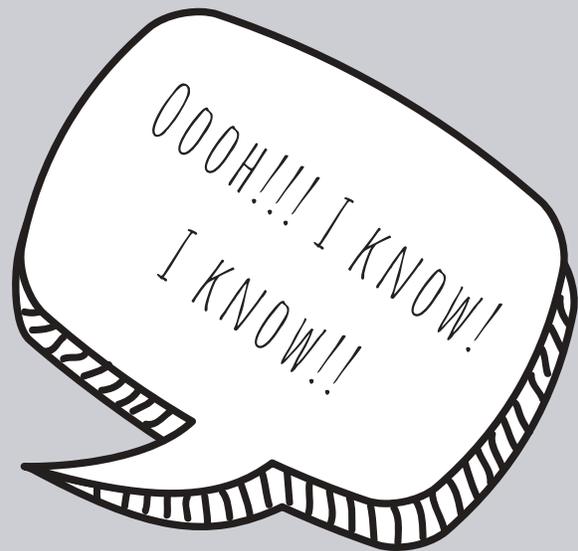




**MILLION CAT
STRATEGIES FOR
SUCCESS SURVEY**



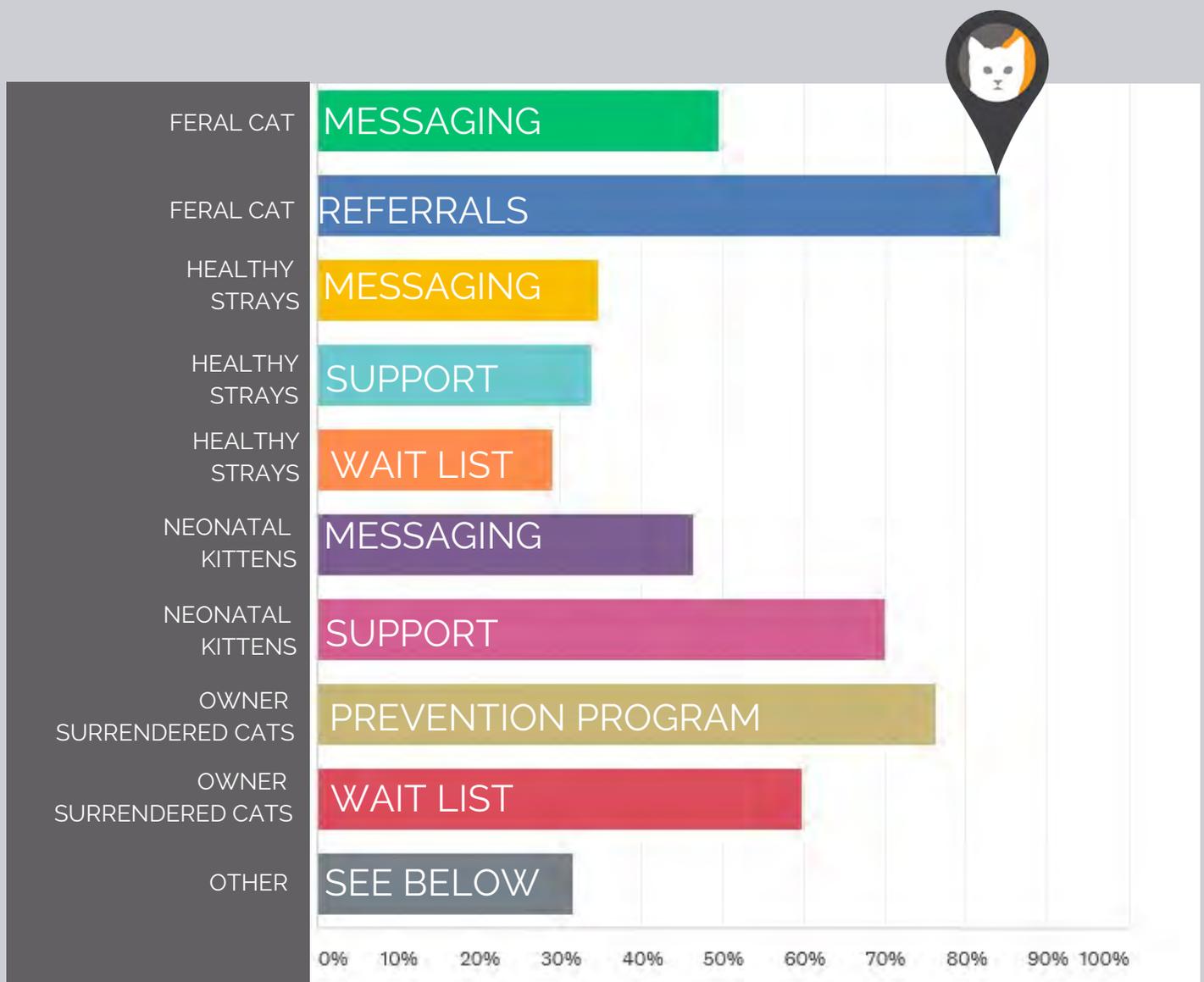
WE POLLED **131** SHELTERS THAT DROPPED
EUTHANASIA BY **50%** OR MORE BETWEEN
2012 AND 2017 TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY DID
AND HOW YOU CAN DO IT TOO.



Alternatives to Intake and Managed Admissions

97.7%

Of shelters implemented some form of Alternatives or Managed Intake. Here's the breakdown:



More specifically:

Feral cats: Messaging (e.g. on your website, phone, social media) that feral cats are better off not coming in to the shelter, with info on alternative ways of co-existing with community cats

Feral cats: Referral to TNR program (in-house or external) as alternative to bringing in feral cats (e.g. community cat diversion program)

Healthy strays: Messaging (e.g. on your website, phone, social media) that healthy stray cats are better off not coming in to the shelter, with info on alternative ways of finding the owner or co-existing with neighborhood strays

Healthy strays: Material support for keeping healthy stray cats out of the shelter (e.g. medical exam, spay/neuter, vaccination)

Healthy strays: Waiting list or scheduled admission for healthy stray cats

Neonatal kittens: Messaging (e.g. on your website, phone, social media) around keeping neonatal kittens out of the shelter, with guidance as to care in the meantime (e.g. "wait til eight" communication)

Neonatal kittens: Material support for keeping neonatal kittens out of the shelter (e.g. foster/finder program, kitten kits)

Owner surrendered cats: Owner surrender prevention program (e.g. pet food bank, spay/neuter, behavioral advice)

Owner surrendered cats: Waiting list or scheduled admission for owner surrendered cats

Please tell us if there are any additional alternatives to intake/managed admissions changes you made that played a significant role in decreasing euthanasia.

Other changes that would fall under the umbrella of managing intakes?



We pay a local non-profit as a contractor to raise neonatal kittens until they are old enough to come back to us for spay/neuter and adoption. Cost is \$65 per kitten and includes foster caretaker, vaccines, dewormer, formula, etc. **(small cost for the lives and resources saved by not taking them into the shelter)**. I came from another shelter and I don't know how or why we never thought of that solution before. We visited local shelters at that time that had 24 hour kitten nurseries and we wished we could have modeled our program after them, but the budget and cost far exceeded what our cities would pay for. **Our arrangement with our rescue group is so cheap compared to trying to do it on our own, plus we get to engage our community in helping us and partner with another group that loves kittens.**

The thing that dropped our intake numbers the most was to implement a \$10/cat charge for admissions. Cat intakes dropped from approximately 2700/year to 1700/year. We are beginning to implement many of the other alternatives starting in late 2017.

Changed the name from "Receiving" to "Resource Center". Added desks and waiting room chairs.

Two of the three local governments who contract with our organization for housing and care of animals, changed their local ordinances to eliminate leash and confinement laws for cats and to update language to support community cat programs. This change caused a **major shift in how animal control responds to calls for cat situation. They will no longer pick up healthy stray cats** and patrons are instructed to put them back or bring them to the shelter themselves (they are also told about the community cat program and that the cat will likely be returned). This **has caused a huge reduction in cat intakes at our shelter which has helped contribute to our substantial reduction in cat euthanasia.**

Since the county has no leash law for cats we altered our admission to **only take in cats that are too young, old, sick or injured to fend for themselves**, and those that are for quarantine, abandonments, hoarding or cruelty, and owner surrender under special circumstances.

Just a note - we implemented an appointment system for healthy strays (we are a non-profit with sheltering contracts), but were **able to revert to no appointments for strays after about 2 years of managed intake.**

We added a second facebook page for posting lost and found notices. This not only helps get the animal's photo out to the public to possibly identify them, and people can also hand in surveys as possible adopters if the animal is not claimed by its owner. **We also implemented a foster to surrender program to allow the finders to foster the animal(s) they found**, rather than only use our registered fosters.

We do not accept healthy stray cats. Finders can bring a cat to the shelter to be scanned for a chip, we will examine cat to see if there are any health issues (abscess, thin, injuries/illnesses) that would require cat to be admitted. If treatable, cat will be treated, **s/n if needed, and returned to neighborhood.** This applies to friendly and feral cats.

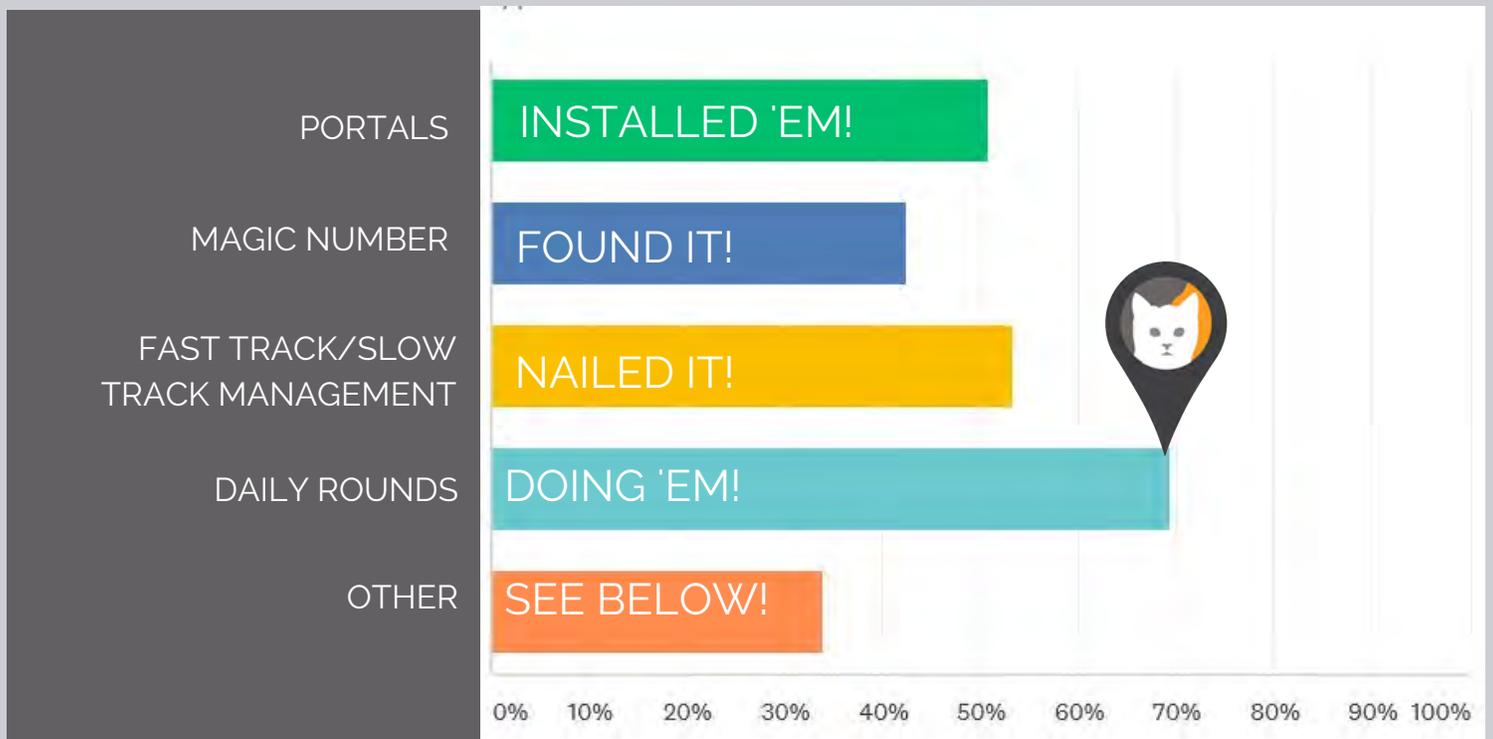


Capacity for Care

90%

Of shelters implemented some form of Capacity for Care (C4C).

Here's the breakdown:



More specifically:

Installation of portals

Calculation of optimal animal population (e.g. “magic number”, “adoption driven capacity”)

Fast track/slow track management

Daily population rounds

Comment box: Please tell us if there are additional changes you made that played a significant role in decreasing euthanasia and that fall under the umbrella of Capacity for Care/improved shelter housing/decreased length of stay.



Other changes that would fall under the C4C umbrella?



We decreased length of stay by implementing funds awarded from a grant to cover **waiving adoption fees on 200 cats over the age of 2 years** and making sure that we have plenty available for adoption that are younger during these events as well.

We partnered with PetSmart to enable us to fast track cats and give them greater visibility to adopters.

We also assessed our cat holding area. We gave up our large meeting room that was **the furthest distance from dog holding**. The room is large enough that they can be processed in this room too. This has led to lower URI rates.

Hired a shelter vet and began doing surgeries onsite, rather than relying on external vet clinics. This eliminated the bottle neck of animals being held while they wait for surgery appointments.

Our cat pods in adoptions and portal housing have significantly reduced the amount of URI we see as a whole. Also taking in less (almost none) strays has decreased our illness

Increasing transfers to other shelters. The important piece here was setting **parameters on what the receiving shelters would accept so that we could speed up the process**. We couldn't afford to transfer out for free all the cats we had paid to prep for adoption nor did we have space to hold onto cats hoping we could find a transfer.

We made changes to our stray time policy - **we used to not count days that we were closed but changed that as we are still staffed on those days and answer emails and phone messages**. In addition, we **added stray animals to our website so they could be viewed**. This decreased our length of stay.

Our local ordinance changed: stray hold went from 6 days on all stray cats to **no stray hold unless they have a microchip or ID tag**.

Getting the stray cats out the same day to our RTF partner for s/n and re-release.

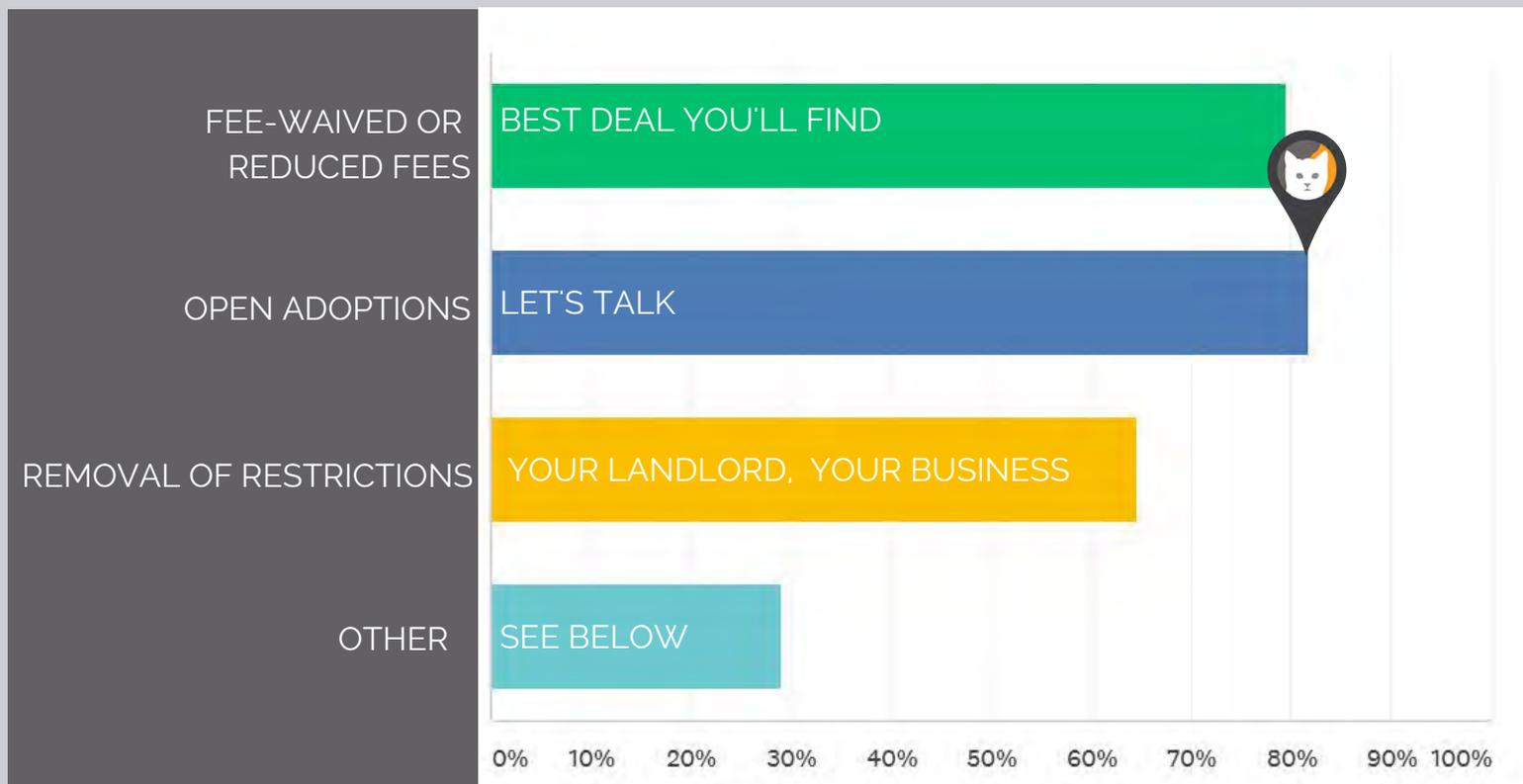
We totally embraced "fast tracking"-when first introduced, there was immediate balking. When we talk about it today, you'd think they invented it! Love my staff. Plus, the customers seem to love it, as do the cats, an added plus.



Removing Barriers to Adoption

96%

Of shelters implemented some form of Removing Barriers to Adoption.
Here's the breakdown:



More specifically:

Fee-waived or substantially reduced fee adoptions (<\$25)

Open adoptions (matching adopter with pet based on conversation versus set rules)

Removal of adoption restrictions (e.g. landlord permission, indoor only)

Please tell us if there's any other ways in which you've removed barriers to adoption that played a significant role in decreasing euthanasia.



Other changes that would fall under the reducing barriers to adoption umbrella?



We improved our adoption procedures by becoming more flexible and focusing on the overall picture versus dog sleeping outside or just one "bad" thing. While we still require landlord approval and bringing resident dog to meet shelter dog, **we encourage conversation and asking open ended questions versus people feeling interviewed. We did away with home checks as that did not result in better adoptions.**

Work with our local rescue partners to have them promote our adoptable pets on their websites and social media sites. Means we are leaning on them less to take animals and using their adoption resources to find homes.

We significantly lowered the adoption fees of cats housed with our offsite adoption partners. This led to cat kennels being refilled every day.

Adopting two cats for nearly the price of one. Seniors/ special needs/ barn cats/ hard to place - **free adoptions**

We already did all of the above with our adoptions with lax rules, although we discourage outdoor homes (unless it is for an outdoor mouser with protections), we educate the adopters about the safest way to keep cats, **but don't prevent them from adopting.**

We encourage **adoption of cats in pairs** especially kittens and provide incentives such as **"2 for 1"**, sponsored cats-adoption fees paid and pre-adoption vet care work-ups for seniors.

We've always implemented open adoption and removal of restrictions. We implemented **"name your own adoption fee"** which made adopters happy and brought higher adoption fees than we expected.

Foster -to-Adopt. They can take the cat home for up to 2 weeks before committing to adopt.

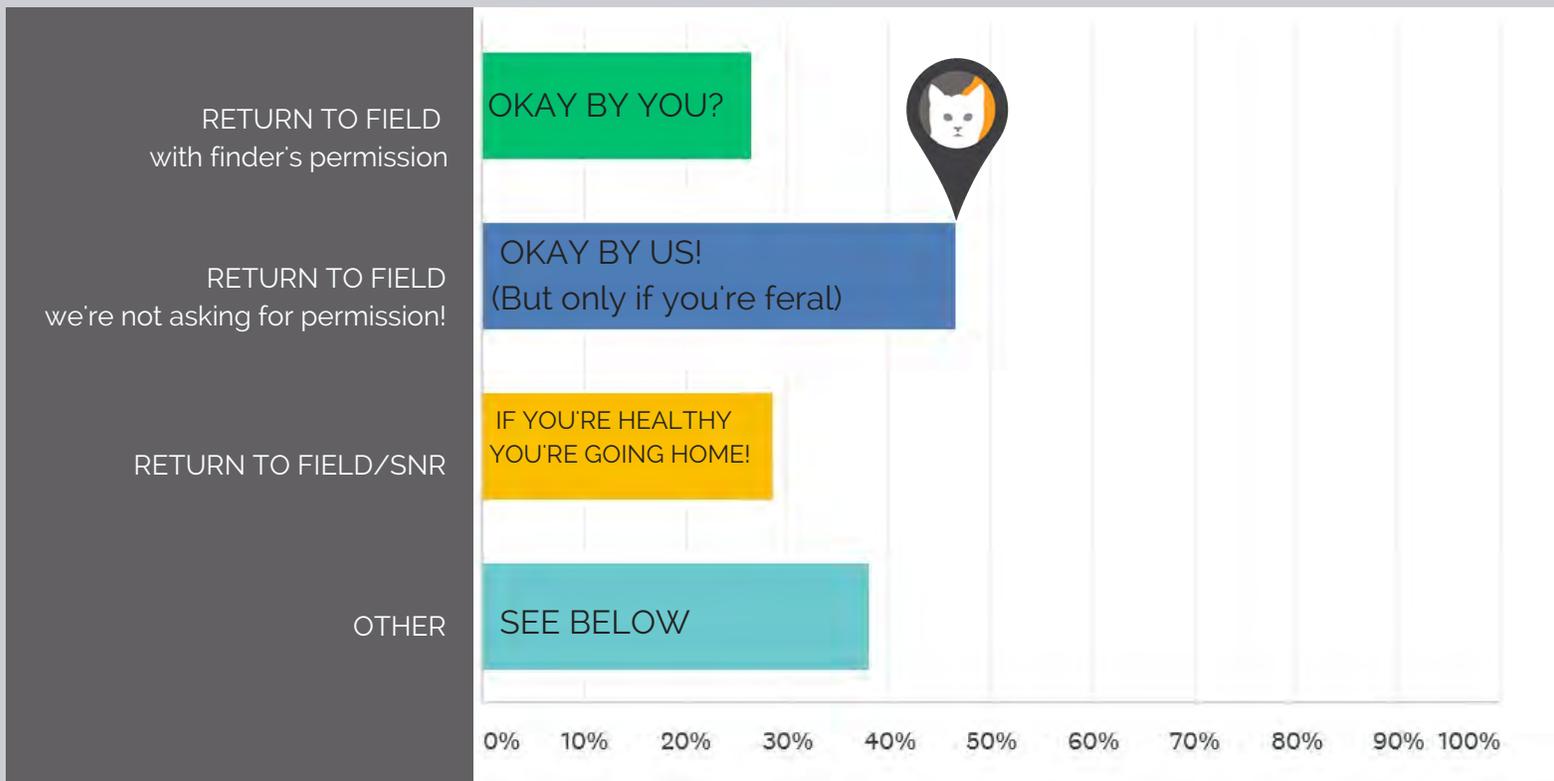
We are considering elimination of our application altogether except for capturing basic information on the adopter and relying on conversation to help enhance the adoption experience.



Return to Field

80%

Of shelters implemented some form of
Return to Field
Here's the breakdown:



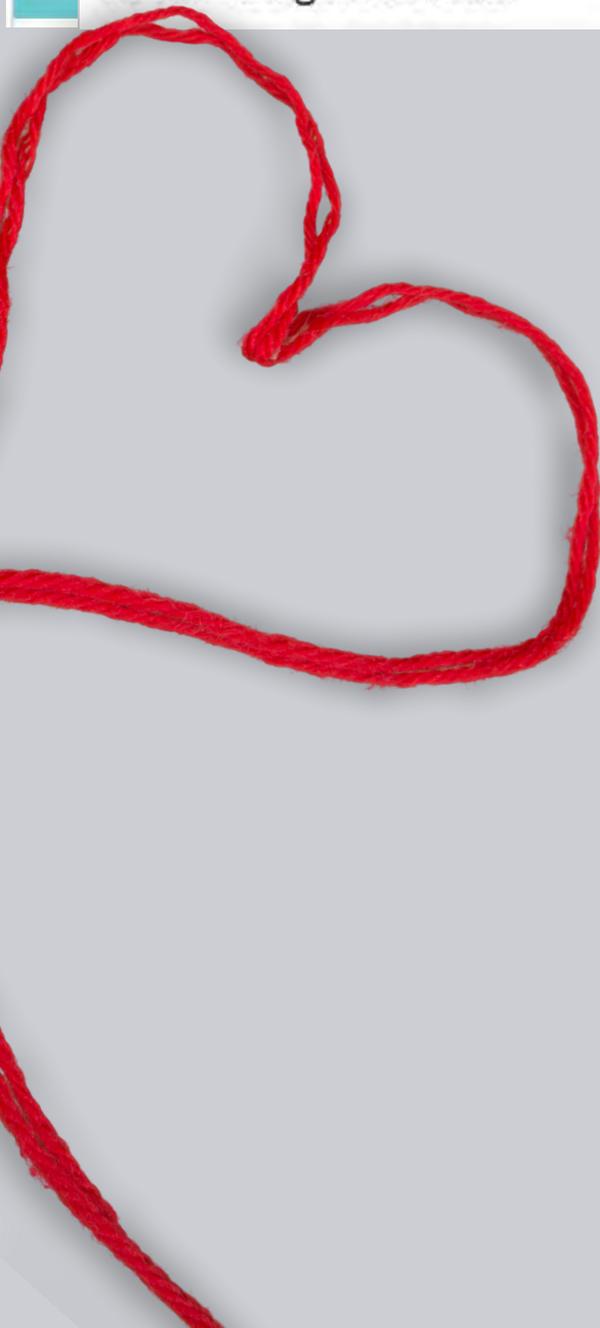
More specifically:

Return to field with finder's permission only

Return to field for most healthy feral cats (finder's permission not required, limited to fearful/unsocial cats)

Return to field for most healthy unidentified free roaming cats (both feral and friendly, finder's permission not required)

Please tell us if there's any additional programs you've implemented for feral or community cats not listed above (including implementing or expanding a working cat program), or adaptations you've made to return to field that don't quite fit the categories listed.



Other changes that would fall under the Return to Field umbrella?



Barn cat program for those healthy feral cats that could not be returned to field (hoarding cases, abandonments-death or relocation of caretaker, neighborhood restrictions, etc.)

We are still working towards a TNR program, for now **we waive adoption fees** for feral cats and **use grant funds to get them fixed so it doesn't cut into our house cat spay/neuter budget.**

Our animal control fought us on TNR and implemented a "I don't want cat back" form and bring form back signed on most of the cats trapped. **We return to the area the first time and if cat is trapped the second, we relocate them to different area.** We also resolve any complaints that come up which is literally about 2 a year.

Working cat program for community cats who do not have appropriate place to return to or for other cats who are not social and who are not adoption candidates. Called "Blue Collar Cats."

Starting a small colony at the Shelter of unadoptable feral cats already in our population for a long time

We don't ask the finder's permission, but if they specifically say they will not allow the cat to return even after we educate them, then we find another safe location for the cat.

Animal Control can not legally return to field in Virginia, so we provide all of the services for TNR (trapping/spay/neuter/delivery after surgery) and waive the adoption fee for caretakes

We started a Barn Cat Program about two years ago for cats with one or more of the following issues: **litter box avoidance, fractious/avoidant/unsocialized behavior,** other issues that would not lend to a successful life indoors.

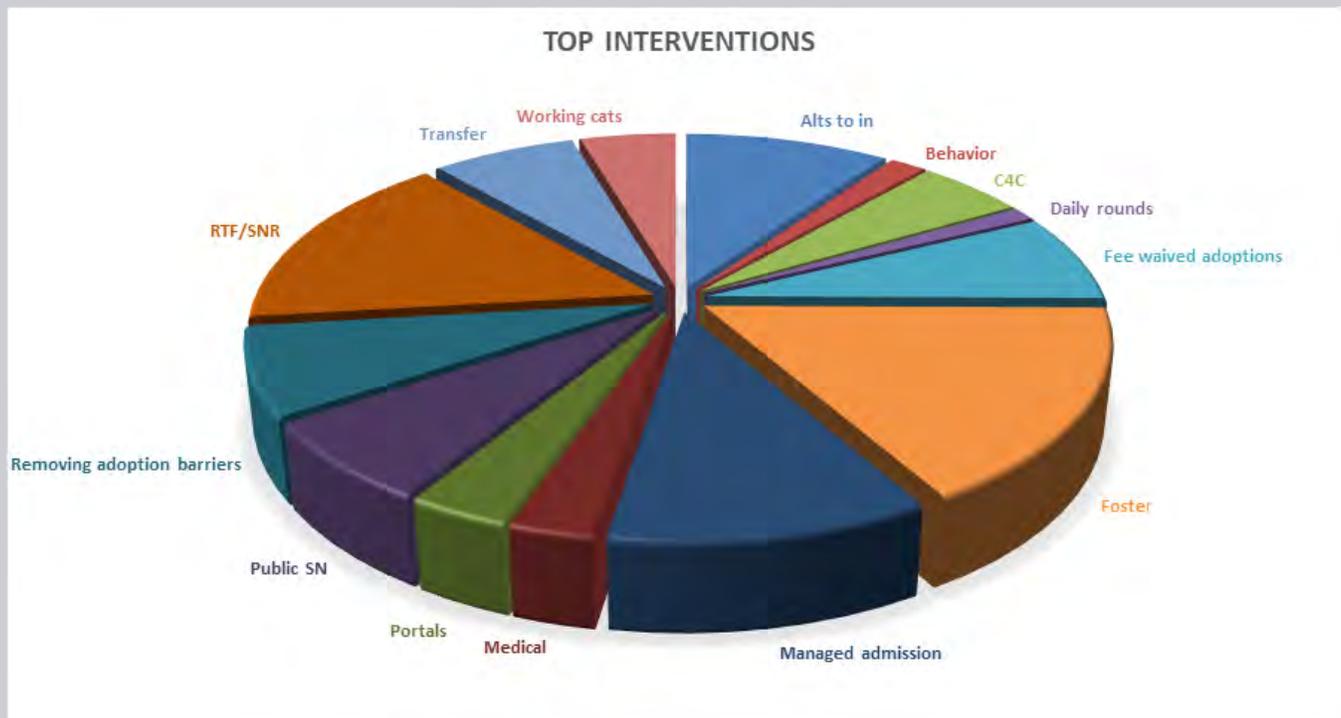
If a cat comes through our Animal Support Center and was living successfully outside and is not a good fit for our shelter, we talk with the owner/finder about **returning the cat where it was thriving.** We also provide low-cost wellness vet care for these cats.

We've removed restrictions with the city code on returning community cats back to where they came from.

We have a **Barn Cat program.** We wrote and recorded our own theme song to support the program. It's on YouTube..



We asked shelters to rank their top two lifesaving interventions



Starting at the blue slice of pie at 12:00 and moving clockwise:

Alts to In

Behavior

C4C

Daily Rounds

Fee Waived Adoptions

Foster

Managed Admission

Medical

Portals!

Public S/N

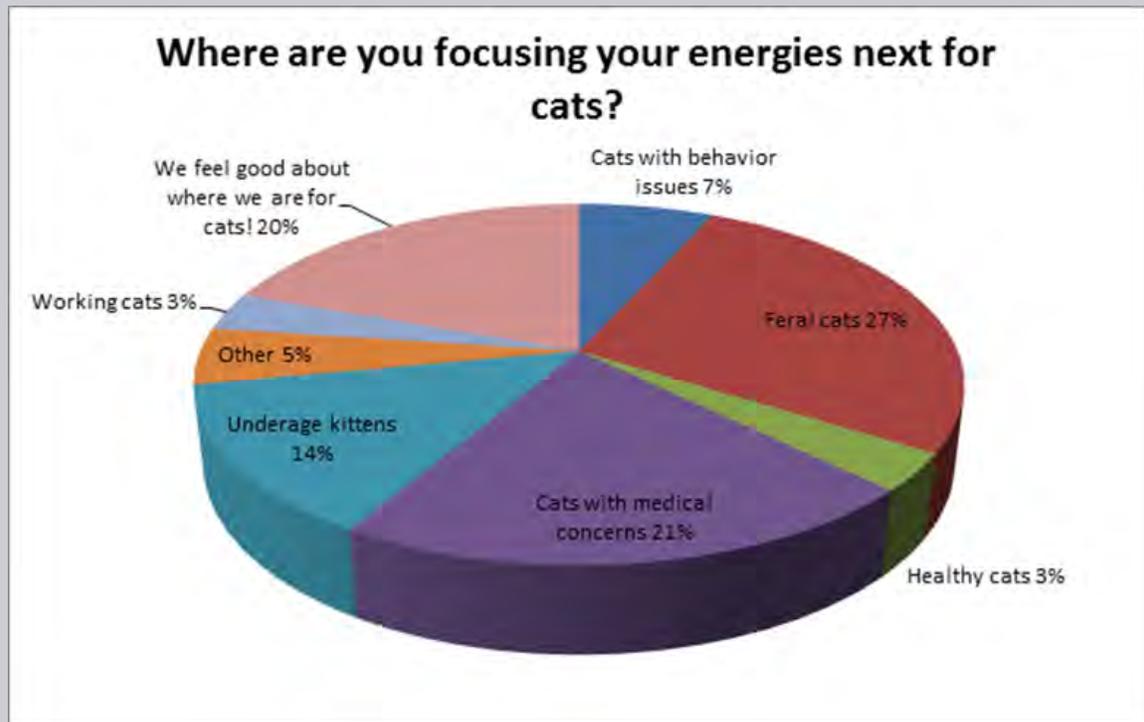
Removing Adoption Barriers

RTF/SNF

Transfer

Working Cats

Oh the places we will go!



Starting at the blue slice of pie at 12:00 and moving clockwise:

Cats with Behavior Issues (includes cats surrendered with behavioral concerns, scaredy cats, cats from hoarding situations that aren't quite ready for life as a companion animal, feral kittens a little too old to easily socialize and a little too young for return, and cats that simply didn't adapt well to shelter life.)

Feral Cats

Healthy Cats

Cats with Medical Concerns (encompassed everything from neonates with upper respiratory infection to cats with FIV, FeLV, brought in injured and sick from the field, and geriatric cats)

Underage Kittens

Other (includes spay/neuter programs for the public, other community outreach and reaching out to other shelters.)

Working cats

Holding steady!

AHA!

It's okay to have a wait list.

Knowing cats are more likely to find their own way home when lost than coming into a shelter.

Realizing animals breed to the availability of food source. Between offering the education to those trying to help with feral colonies and preaching s/n

The mind shift of "what" is a community cat and just how few cats are reclaimed by their owners (less than 1%) vs. if we leave them where they are found (or put them right back where they are found spayed/neutered, vaccinated, ear-tipped).

That when asked to engage in a humane solution, many citizens were willing to do so.



AHA! moments



I attended my first Animal Expo. I took what I learned to my boss/board of directors. **With their support, walls came down, portals went in, LOS dropped, illness dropped, euthanasia numbers dropped and adoption numbers soared!**

Counseling people on **allowing healthy stray cats to go home vs come to the shelter** is an Aha moments for many people when you explain it.

We always thought that as an open shelter we must accept any animal at all times. **The public has been very receptive to our idea of scheduling** once they understand our logic behind it.

We decided one day to make **staying within our capacity for care** an actual goal, not because life would be easier with less cats in the shelter, but because that was our key to decreasing euthanasia. We focused on implementing ideas and protocols that **decreased length of stay and removed bottlenecks to live outcomes. Cats are flying out the door!**

Honestly, I remember sitting at Animal Care Expo listening to Dr. Hurley launch the Million Cats Challenge with her talk about cats and I thought, **"it doesn't have to be this way." We CAN get to a point where we experience "catlessness" and I'm not rounding daily choosing which cats to kill. So we just did it.** It was a combination of a ton of factors some of which were implemented quickly and some took more time. I was lucky to have Board members who supported my changes and I can't believe we're here today. I actually said to our TNR partner yesterday on the phone, "Cats are not my problem. Dogs are my problem." And it's true! I can move senior FIV+ cats faster than I can move pit bulls!

Fee-waived adoptions made such a big difference emotionally for our adoption center staff and volunteers. **Empty kennels in summer!**

My AHA moment was when we were able to turn our euthanasia room into a storage room. We still do a small amount of euthanasia, but not enough that we need a large room devoted to just that.



AHA! moments

“

Driving home the message that with limited resources, **we need to focus our support on cats that actually need help**. Healthy outdoor cats are not at risk and do not require a shelter intervention.

RTF/TNR is one of the easiest things to increase your lifesaving capacity. After educating the community on the benefits of a RTF/TNR program, it has **received almost 100% support from our community**.

CATS ARE COOL. CATS THRIVE. CATS HAVE LIVED AMONGST US FOR THE LAST 10,000 YEARS AND ARE DOING JUST FINE. ONCE WE FIGURED THIS OUT, WE WERE ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY. THERE MUST BE A 12 STEP PROGRAM FOR SAVING CATS. WE ARE HAPPY TO WORK ON THAT.

1) WE ADMITTED THE CAT POPULATION WAS UNMANAGEABLE AND WE FELT POWERLESS TO FIX IT (UNTIL THE MILLION CAT CHALLENGE).



”

How does it feel now that you've made those changes?



Every chance we get, we tell people about our numbers, who we are as a shelter, where we used to be, and where we ARE going. Adopters, donors, volunteers, etc all **love to hear how much our euthanasia numbers have gone down AND our intake numbers have gone up.**

Big happy smiling faces, staff and volunteers both. No longer dread days because of incoming, surrenderers are treated better because its not life or death by us taking their cat.

Not having a literal STACK of feral cats to euthanize everyday **has improved morale SIGNIFICANTLY.**

Currently, it's amazing! We only have 10 cats in the building right now on April 10th. **We're astonished!** Staff morale is up because euthanasia is down!

Staff is **much more relaxed,** we have **time to spend on continuing education, training and skills** updating. Animals are much healthier (URI free shelter for 10 weeks!!!)

It's inspiring because **we're getting cats adopted that would have never gotten a chance before...**We're showing cats with positive FIV and FeLV results deserve to be in a home. We're showing **even in our busiest time every animal can get the care they need** thanks to our expanded foster home program (with lots and lots of marketing!).

Staff, volunteers, supporters and the community are proud of their shelter. **The shelter is seen as a safe harbor,** where animals will find the help they need and it's perceived as a fun place to visit. It is a place of **hope rather than despair.**

The volunteers have a more positive outlook, as well as our fosters. **They volunteer longer and foster more cats** due to our live-saving efforts.

Our staff...They **took this job to save lives, not to end them.** And yet before we implemented these programs, we were taking in close to 10,000 cats and kittens annually and euthanizing at least 50% of them. After we added these life-saving programs and initiatives, not only has the staff mindset changed but so has the community mindset. **Our employees finally feel like they are ahead of the curve when for so long they struggled just to stay afloat.**



How does it feel now that you've made those changes?



We have more cat volunteers than we ever have had before, because now they're not scared that the cats 'are just going to be euthanized' if they sneeze or scratch; the volunteers in turn have been a huge success in increasing our adoptions - talking to adopters and really knowing the cats' personalities.

Our shelter's facility/structure is ranked 5th worse in the state of KY but **if there was a ranking for how well we care for and love our animals it would rank #1.**

The **TNR program gave us our second wind** and opened a new audience. The changes have **improved employee moral**, improved **relationships with cat volunteers** and in turn the **public's perception** of our shelter.

There is a much more positive energy here, **cats are content and healthy, staff are happier** knowing we are much more likely to have live outcomes, and as the public learn about our initiatives we are seeing a change in how the public and our peers perceive our organization. **We actually have been nicknamed the little shelter that could.**

Our shelter is a happy place to work. As mentioned, the staff is happy being part of a team. Because there is never a time when animals must be selected for euthanasia because of space, **we don't lose quality employees due to "shelter burnout".**

So much less stress than when we took in EVERY cat for ANY reason, on demand. **Empty cages, more resources for the cats that really need it.**

The staff and volunteers are now **singing praise about our animal welfare organization** and feel like they are making a difference **instead of working at a "pound."**

We haven't had to euthanize a healthy, adoptable cat since November 2016. We usually have plenty of space in our cat kennels. This has been great for special needs cats like a shy bonded pair or an FIV+

The shelter staff is a lot happier and more motivated and **the cats actually have a chance now!!**



How does it feel now that you've made those changes?



Today when a cat comes through the door in a trap my heart no longer sinks as that cat will live and have a good life!

It is great. **Today we have 110 animals at our shelter, 30 below our capacity for care. This time last year, we were already buried.**

It feels incredible to improve as we have, and **you can really see the staff- who've struggled through the changes we undertook- begin to smile** at the progress we've made.

BCAS has made an incredible number of changes over the past 4 years. New facilities and off-site spay/neuter clinics, expanded staff and programs, updates to local legislation - **it's impossible not to smile.** But the best part is that it keeps going.

It is not a sad, dreary shelter here at CPHS. We have bright colors on the wall and our staff are dedicated to finding forever homes for each and every animal that comes through our doors.

We have been able to reach out and help our neighboring county, with a cat euthanasia between 80-90%. We have been pulling cats from the shelter, and have recently partnered with them to start a TNR transport to their county. THE FEELING IS INCREDIBLE!

Fewer cats are dying my staff is proud of their shelter and are empowered. They hold their heads high when they talk about their shelter. The community loves the dumb old shelter and **talk about us the municipal shelter as the place to go for help.**

We put out graphs on our adoption floor to explain why there are no cats as people come in and wonder why there are so many empty cages - so it is a great opportunity to let public know about our success.

We are rocking and rolling! We have proven that incredibly, amazing and rock star stuff can happen if you let it. **Trust people. People are wonderful.**

90%+ LRR for cats. Less than 10 cats being treated for URI typically. **Our shelter is a much happier place.**

Totally different shelter from when I started 5 years ago. At that time only 20% of felines left alive. Now 76 - 80% of cats received leave as live outcomes. I'm definitely smiling. **Things are going so well, I'm retiring.**

It is quite strange to have so few cats available for adoption throughout most of the year. What a great problem to have! In 2013, 14,141 cats were euthanized at our shelter. In 2017, 1,918 cats were euthanized.

Being able to watch our team experience and enjoy these improvements on a daily basis and then **celebrating the tremendous annual improvements has inspired us all to keep pushing!**

