



## **Understanding Oahu's animal population & community responsibility**

The Hawaiian Humane Society accepts 100 percent of the animals brought in for help regardless of health, age, behavior, and species. This includes cats, dogs, rabbits and turtles, as well as exotic animals and wildlife. It also includes the happy and healthy, as well as the sick and suffering. **It is Oahu's only shelter that welcomes all animals in any condition.**

**Hawaiian Humane Society is committed to finding homes for 100 percent of the dogs and cats that are healthy and friendly. Animals for adoption remain as long as it takes to find a new family.**

Significant changes have helped to make more animals available for adoption. The Society has expanded its medical and behavioral foster care programs—increasing the number of cats and dogs from 731 in 2008 to more than 1,442 in 2015. More than 100 animals are in foster care at any given time with an expanded network of nearly 400 providers. With upwards of 300 animals in care daily, animals are placed in foster care for space reasons.

Partnerships have grown to include more than 250 island-wide events annually from west Oahu to the windward side. Marketing, promotions, discounts, and community mobilization efforts resulted in nearly 7,500 adoptions in a year's time. As part of its pet retention program, we provide a behavior support help line for all adopters.

The Society has integrated prevention programs to include education, outreach, volunteer activism and advocacy. Its youth education and community outreach programs have expanded and targeted underserved communities where families are most at-risk of not being able to care for animals adequately.

Identification programs have expanded to offer microchipping daily. This is in addition to its month-long microchip initiative that provides ID to more than 2,500 animals a year. The Society maintains its own microchip database for Oahu's animals and is one of the only shelters in the nation to do so. The organization is Oahu's official pet lost and found center.

The Society will continue to provide solutions to the fullest extent of our resources, as it has since 1883.

## **Hawaii's challenges**

In some Mainland communities where reducing euthanasia has been most successful, there are several shelters that don't turn away animals in a county that form a safety net with a multitude of groups to help. These networks are strengthened by well-funded county programs, a charitable veterinary community, accessible and affordable spay/neuter options, a highly educated public and strong animal protection laws.

As Oahu's only shelter that welcomes all, the organization receives the vast majority of animals in the community – more than 23,000 in 2015. In addition, it's much more challenging for Hawaii's shelters to transfer animals to another state. Hawaii has a tropical climate with more daylight than most states that encourages year-round breeding of cats, coupled with a lack of predators. Hawaii also has a growing transient human population.

These environmental factors present challenges – especially on Oahu where the population is nearly 1 million people. According to a Ward Research study, more than 60 percent of Oahu's households include a pet. In addition, more than 26 percent of Oahu's pet owners acquired their pet from profit-making entities rather than from shelters or rescue groups.

These challenges are not insurmountable and offer opportunities for creativity and ambition when it comes to saving lives.

## **Our approach to improve the lives of animals**

The goal is to help the community achieve better outcomes for animals. An individual shelter's progress over time is a reflection of the success of the community's overall education, intervention and outreach initiatives.

Positive trends would include fewer homeless animals, more lost pets returned home, a decreased need for spay/neuter surgeries because more pets arrive sterilized, and ultimately, reduced euthanasia. These numbers are improving and Oahu's trends are moving in the right direction.

The Society's community education and progressive field services team work to help pet owners become better caregivers, which is critical to its work.

While the impact of animal arrivals affects how resources are allocated, it does not necessarily mean that fewer arrivals means more lives saved because the shelter does not control the number of and the condition of animals that arrive. For example, 1,035 cats and dogs were euthanized in 2015 at the owner's request for humane and medical reasons. Another 602 arrived deceased.

The commitment includes significant medical and behavioral health services, as well as quality-of-life care so that as many as possible can get their best start. With limited housing capacity in the adoptions center, the organization fosters (not euthanize) for space and there is no limit on how long an animal is kept for adoption.

**The goal is to continue to make an ever-increasing number of animals with treatable medical and behavioral problems rehabilitated and available for adoption.**

## **What drives euthanasia**

Euthanasia may rise or fall on a year-to-year basis and is a reflection of collective choices by the public and the community's compassion, resources and willingness to help.

**The first step to reduce euthanasia is to recognize that it is a community issue and not a shelter failure.**

Community drivers of euthanasia include the stray cat that is fed but not fixed, the pet shop puppy that is purchased and bred, the unsterilized cat that is abandoned upon moving. The collective impact of individual choices affect Oahu's euthanasia rate. The Humane Society does not judge the hard and heart-breaking choices made by the public; yet it also s

Some may claim that pet overpopulation is a myth. Pet overpopulation means there are more animals than the community can care for. Hawaiian Humane Society receives more than 23,000 animals a year. Pet overpopulation is indeed a reality—and includes a wide spectrum of animals from the sick to the healthy.

## **Why the term “no kill” can hurt efforts to save lives**

There are only two kinds of shelters - those that turn animals away and shelters that welcome all. “No Kill” shelters do not accept all the animals that are brought to them. They turn away animals as soon as they are full and often direct the sick, injured, diseased, dangerous and feral to a shelter that welcomes all. That is the Hawaiian Humane Society on Oahu.

The Society is designed to save as many healthy, adoptable animals possible. That's where the organization believes its resources are best channeled due to the large influx of animals that arrive – sometimes more than 100 a day. This is in addition to running 30 programs and services targeted at prevention, education, intervention, outreach and advocacy. In many communities, low-capacity shelters that turn animal away or rescue groups prefer to specialize in helping unadoptable animals or those that need intensive care and rehabilitation support. They can provide the resources, time and care to work on the cases that are more challenging so that shelters that welcome all can continue to work at maximum efficiency in adoptions and lost and found on a large-scale basis.

The term “no kill” does not celebrate what all organizations have in common – and that's saving animals' live.

## **Free-roaming cats need our compassion**

When animals come to the Humane Society sometimes it is the result of when the human-animal bond breaks – from the lost stray who needs to find his way home to a pet relinquished that an owner loves deeply. In the case of feral cat arrivals, it often means the bond with a person was never formed.

Seventeen percent of Oahu residents feed neighborhood cats that they don't consider their own. Seventy percent of those residents don't know if the cats they feed are sterilized. The Society offers a reduced- rate sterilization program for feral cats is offered year-round.

Hawaii needs more who are willing to be caregivers and support a strategy of trap, neuter, return and manage so that feral cats can be sterilized, cared for, and live out their natural lives. This strategy works to humanely reduce the population and requires tremendous collaboration to accomplish.

It is estimated that the majority of female cats in a colony must be sterilized to be effective. The Humane Society has sterilized more than 30,000 feral cats since 2005, which has prevented hundreds of thousands of additional animals in our community. In addition, the organization works on many cases a year related to feral cats – education of property managers, businesses and landowners about the benefits of TNRM.

In FY 2015, 3,697 feral cats were euthanized because they were brought to the shelter as unwanted animals and they were unsuitable for placement with families. The Society does not trap and euthanize feral animals or wildlife. However, thousands are brought to the shelter by the community.

Newborns without their mothers present a tremendous challenge for any shelter because of the intensive, round-the-clock care required for these fragile lives. Without an intensive care unit and caregivers to provide feeding every few hours, 2,705 newborn kittens without mothers were euthanized.

The Humane Society offers free newborn care kits and materials to the public, brochures, and information posted on its website. Throughout the year it drives education campaigns and advocacy for cats. The public is encouraged to care for newborns until they are of weight and age for spay/neuter. In addition, there are a few volunteers willing to bottlefeed newborns who are on the cusp of eating independently.

## **Understanding definitions of animals**

As the largest animal welfare and protection charitable organization in Hawaii, the Hawaiian Humane Society believes in transparency and accountability. While its collective efforts cannot be measured by statistics alone, the numbers are an important part of the community's story and a reflection of island values in regards to animals.

Animals that are healthy, friendly and treatable present the greatest potential to save lives. Truly healthy, adoptable animals are those who may need vaccinations, sterilization, and a loving home. Treatable animals are those with a medical or behavioral issue that's neither too complex nor expensive that most of us would resolve if it were our own pet.

To some degree, the definitions of “healthy,” “adoptable,” and “treatable” can change over time – dependent on resources such as volunteers, medical advancements, community support and funding. Nationwide attempts to create standardized, universal definitions leave critically important interpretation up to an organization. They vary by shelter, rescue group and even community.

The Society ensures that all healthy and friendly companion animals are made available for adoption. It makes an ever- increasing number of treatable animals available too. Treatable animals represent more than 25 percent of all cats and dogs adopted. That’s more than 1,442 animals in 2015 that were helped by care that may have included advanced medical and behavioral services, outsourced veterinary care and foster care.

Let’s take a look at how definitions are subject to interpretation. *Parvo*, a deadly virus that mostly affects unvaccinated puppies, can be classified as “treatable” - at a cost of thousands of dollars per animal, with long-term recovery and a high mortality rate. It’s highly contagious, can take days for the infected to exhibit symptoms, and could easily spread to an entire population at a shelter - a risk we are currently not able to take.

The shelter once considered *demodectic mange* “non-treatable.” Now, many dogs affected by this disease are available for adoption with the help of dedicated foster providers who are willing to care for these dogs during long-term treatment.

A heartworm positive dog is considered “unhealthy” by many shelters across the nation – especially when Immiticide, the only potential cure, was removed from the market for a time and is currently available only in limited quantities. There are now ways to treat this life-threatening illness.

Cats and dogs with medical or behavioral conditions that would not likely or reasonably be addressed by any owner/guardian or any organization are likely to be euthanized. 1,382 cats and 1,045 dogs were euthanized in 2015 for medical/health reasons such as life-threatening diseases and traumatic injuries. 417 cats and 795 dogs were euthanized for behavioral reasons of which the most common is aggression. Eighty newborn puppies without their mothers to nurse them in which no volunteers were willing to help were euthanized.

We save as many lives as the community will help us save. We invest millions of dollars a year in food, shelter, health care, clinic services, behavior support and more. Our goal is to continue to support the community in positive trends to improve the lives of Oahu’s animals.

## What you can do to help

The Society can and will do more to save lives. However, it cannot solve the issues of overpopulation alone. The community must make better choices and to foster compassion and action for the plight of homeless animals.

- Choosing adoption is important. However, a community cannot adopt its way out of overpopulation. Pet ownership is as high as 90 percent in some Oahu communities and every community faces what's known as a saturation rate in which there is not enough homes for homeless animals.
- Spay and neuter does save lives by preventing an excess of animals from being born in the first place. The most important thing you can do as an individual to save more lives is to spay/neuter pets that belong to all your family and friends.
- An astounding 14,365 dogs and cats arrived as strays in 2015 and that represents about 57 percent of admissions. Some of those are potentially lost animals - if these pets had identification, it would impact resources tremendously. When Hawaiian Humane Society developed the 1995 cat law, which required outdoor cats to have identification, it increased the number of cats we were able to reunite with their owners. In a 2009 study, the nationwide return-to-owner rate was 1.8 percent for cats. On Oahu, the rate of return for cats was 6 percent.
- Tell others how you support Oahu's shelters are and encourage collaboration and support amongst groups who care about animals. Good will and support for shelters that are willing to take the suffering, sick, dangerous and feral encourages people to help animals in our care.
- As the Humane Society moves towards devoting more resources to spay and neuter, lost and found, adoptions events islandwide as well as education, prevention and outreach, we welcome partnerships to rehabilitate and re-home animals that come to us in need. All rescue groups and feral cat organizations who share its mission are invited to partner and help animals.

The Society's work is the collective success of individual contributions that help animals. Everyone can do something large or small to help make Oahu a better place for animals.