

No Kill Equation - Medical and Behavior Programs (a “get them out” element)

Shelters need to keep animals happy and healthy and keep animals moving efficiently through the system. To do this, shelters must put in place comprehensive vaccinations, handling, cleaning, socialization and care policies and procedures before animals get sick and rehabilitative efforts for those who come in sick, injured, unweaned, or traumatized.

In a no kill community, this element of the equation starts with vaccination of all animals which enter the facility to prevent the spread of illness from one pet to another. Research shows that vaccination at intake will prevent the majority of canine and feline illnesses that plague shelters (many of which animals acquire after they enter the shelter and did not have prior to being in the shelter). Vaccinations can be purchased in bulk and are very inexpensive. Any cost for a vaccine is far less than the cost to either treat sick animals or to destroy them and dispose of them. Maddie's Fund states, “shelters that only vaccinate some animals, or none, or that fail to vaccinate prior to or at the instant of intake are not just increasing the risk of infectious disease outbreaks, they're guaranteeing them.”

This element also includes helping animals which have specific medical conditions or neonatal animals which require special care until they can consume solid food. A fund can be set up to help offset costs for animals who need particular care (like treatment for heart worm or special surgical procedures). Such funds are often named after a beloved pet who has died and is a way for people to help the shelter through philanthropy, perhaps to honor the memory of their own pet. In the case of neonatal animals, those animals can be spared by having them temporarily housed in foster homes where they are fed on an ongoing schedule and until they are old enough to consume solid food. Shelter can also help animals which are traumatized or may have some behavioral issues by partnering with local behaviorists, trainers and veterinarians to help evaluate these animals and make recommendations on how best to help them and find them new homes.

The medical/behavior programs element also includes analysis of the types of animals which most often end up in the shelter. By determining the source or cause of problems, those problems can be addressed. For example, if there are ongoing issues with large numbers of puppies and kittens, those issues can be addressed (at least to a degree) with education about and promotion of spay/neuter. If there are a large number of dogs entering the shelter that were found running at large, that issue can be addressed with education and by identifying locations where dogs are commonly allowed to run at large.