

# AnimalShelterStatistics



Lola arrived at the Kitchener-Waterloo Humane Society in June, 2014. She was adopted in October.



CFHS  FSCAA

Canadian Federation  
of Humane Societies

Fédération des sociétés  
canadiennes d'assistance  
aux animaux

# 2013

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# INTRODUCTION

Humane societies and Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCAs) are a pillar of the animal welfare movement in Canada. The Canadian SPCA, the first in the country, was formed in Montreal in 1869 to provide for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the dominion. The next three decades saw the formation of the Ontario SPCA (known then as the Ontario Humane Society), the Nova Scotia Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Toronto Humane Society, and the British Columbia SPCA. Today the CFHS is aware of 172 humane societies and SPCAs located across the country that shelter animals (Table 1).

**Table 1. Humane Societies and SPCAs in Canada by province or territory**

Province or Territory	Number of humane society and SPCA shelters*
Alberta	20
British Columbia	40
Manitoba	6
New Brunswick	10
Newfoundland and Labrador	8
Northwest Territories	2
Nova Scotia	7
Nunavut	1
Ontario	47
Prince Edward Island	1
Quebec	17
Saskatchewan	12
Yukon	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>

\*Where a humane society or SPCA organization has separate shelter branches, each branch is considered an individual shelter.

In their early years, humane societies and SPCAs were charged with protecting, not only animals, but also children and women. Their mandate included investigating cruelty complaints, education about and promotion of humane

treatment, as well as proposing and enforcing legislation for the protection of animals. The focus of these societies was often the welfare of workhorses, who were common victims of cruelty and neglect, along with farm animals, such as cattle and cocks used for fighting. Gradually their purview extended to companion animals and wildlife.

With time these charitable organizations took on the role of sheltering and providing direct care for stray and unwanted companion animals, returning stray animals to their guardians, and finding homes for those in need. In recent years, societies have also implemented programs to provide veterinary services and support for animal care in the community at large. Through their role in ending animal cruelty, advancing animal protection, and promoting the humane treatment of animals, humane societies and SPCAs play a vital role in building a humane Canada.

This report presents the results of the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS) survey of humane societies and SPCAs for the year 2013, which demonstrate the scale of cats and dogs being taken in to shelters across Canada as well as their eventual outcome. A comparison of the 2013 figures to those from shelter surveys conducted by the CFHS in previous years suggests slowly improving trends in the homeless companion animal population in Canada, particularly for cats.

Individual shelters and communities collect and analyze data about the animals under their care to fulfill essential functions, such as evaluating the effectiveness of their programs (for example, those targeting increased adoption or spay/neuter), prioritizing program resource allocation, and for accountability. The aggregation of this shelter data at a national level is critical to provide indicators of companion animal welfare and responsible guardianship in Canadian society. National data also affords indicators of the scale of work being undertaken by Canadian shelters as an industry. Finally, it permits individual organizations to benchmark themselves against national averages.

Throughout this report the term “shelter” is used as a short form to refer to humane societies and SPCAs. While the term more generally encompasses other establishments that also shelter homeless animals, such as individual private shelters, rescue and foster groups, and municipal animal services, these establishments were not targeted by the CFHS survey. Therefore, the data in this report represents only a fraction of homeless companion animals in Canada.

# SHELTERS' ROLES & RESOURCES

The CFHS, the only national organization representing humane societies and SPCAs in Canada, has been collecting statistics from animal shelters since 1993. To collect the 2013 data, the CFHS conducted an online survey between April and October 2014. Requests were sent to the 172 Canadian humane societies and SPCAs to complete the survey, and 90 complete responses were received. This corresponds to a response rate of 52%. Of the 90 responding organizations, 64 are members of the CFHS.

For the 2013 year, the CFHS included in its survey a number of questions regarding the services shelters offer within their communities, as well as the resources they have to deliver these services. The responding humane societies and SPCAs ranged from serving areas with a population of 5,000 to 8 million people. The average human population served by a shelter is approximately 330,000 people. Apart from typical animal sheltering services for homeless animals, the majority of organizations are contracted with their municipality's animal control services and are mandated to enforce provincial animal legislation. In addition, most shelters

provide educational outreach regarding the humane and responsible care of animals. Almost half of the responding organizations provide emergency services for owned animals, such as emergency boarding and pet safe keeping for victims of domestic violence. Many organizations provide services for owned animals, including low-income veterinary care, emergency veterinary care, sterilization services, permanent identification, and euthanasia services (see Table 2).

The range of annual budgets of responding organizations is between \$60,000 and \$9 million, with an average of \$1.2 million and a median of approximately \$500,000. Some humane societies and SPCAs are run entirely by volunteers. The number of full-time staff employed by the responding organizations ranged from 0 to 95, with an average of 11 and a median of 4. The number of volunteers engaged by responding organizations ranged from 8 to 875, with an average of 207 and a median of 100. Thus, we can see the incredible support of engaged members of the community to their local humane societies and SPCAs in providing care for homeless companion animals.

Table 2. Number and percentage of responding shelters that offer services in addition to sheltering

Type of Service	Number	Percentage
Enforcement of provincial animal protection legislation	63	68%
Educational outreach	56	61%
Animal control contract to municipality	50	54%
Emergency services for owned animals	42	46%
Enforcement of municipal animal by-laws	30	33%
Euthanasia for owned animals	21	23%
Permanent identification for owned animals	15	16%
Low-income veterinary care for owned animals	11	12%
Other	6	7%

# INTAKE AND CAPACITY

Intake represents the total number of cats and dogs received by the shelters who responded to the 2013 survey. Shelters in Canada took in over 103,000 cats and over 46,000 dogs in 2013 (Appendix, Figure 1). These figures represent a significant decrease in intake relative to the previous year, though the number of reporting organizations was also lower. When this is corrected by comparing the average number of animals taken in per organization from year to year, a decrease in both cats and dogs taken in to shelters in 2013 is still observed (Figure 2). The intake of cats has consistently been much greater than dogs: shelter surveys conducted by the CFHS indicate that since 2001 Canadian shelters have taken in approximately twice as many cats in a given year as dogs.

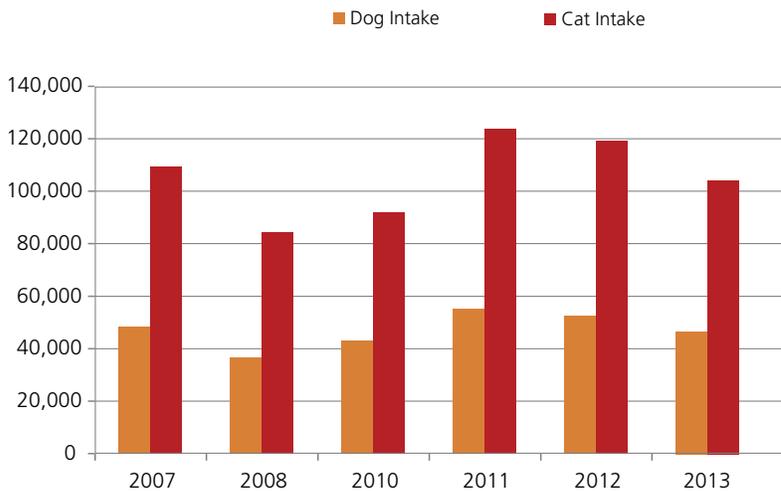


Figure 1. Total intake of cats and dogs to shelters

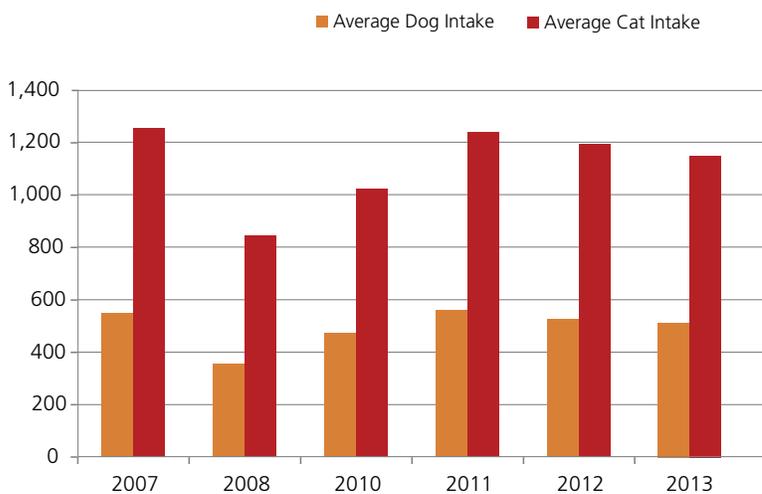


Figure 2. Average intake per reporting organization

Figure 3 presents the sources of cats and dogs brought to Canadian shelters in 2013. The majority of animals were taken in as stray (60% of cat intake and 49% of dog intake). Animals surrendered by their guardians make up the second largest category (28% of cat intake and 34% of dog intake). Although twice the number of cats entered shelters than dogs, it is important to note the similar proportions of the intake categories.

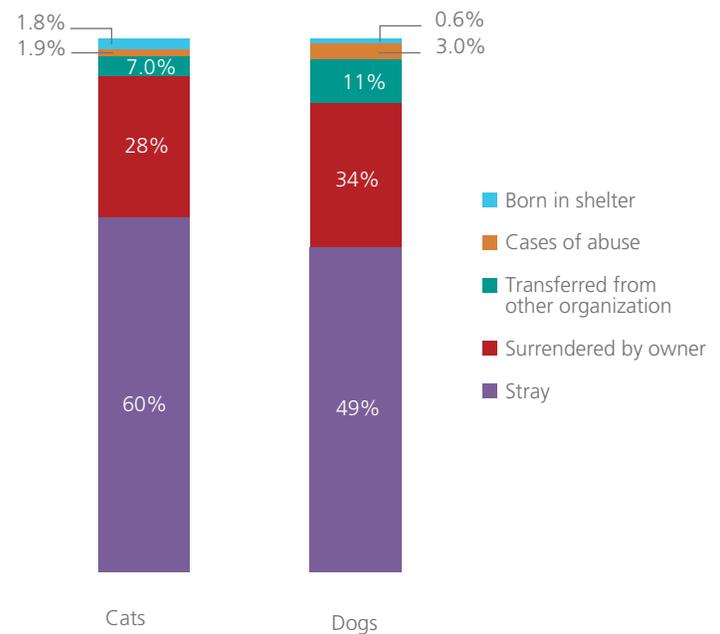


Figure 3. Sources of intake of cats and dogs in 2013

In 2013 the CFHS began asking responding shelters to report their statistics by age (adult vs. juvenile). Three quarters of respondents did so, and for those shelters 38% of cats taken in were kittens and 17% of dogs taken in were puppies. The abundance of unwanted kittens in particular demonstrates the need for increased feline spay/neuter.

The capacity of a shelter to house cats and dogs may be measured in different ways by different shelters; nevertheless, it is interesting to look at the capacity that responding shelters reported having. The average capacity of responding shelters is 148 cats and dogs, with a range between 26 and 500 and a median of 115. On average, 94% of the capacity of responding shelters was in use, and the median was 90%.

# OUTCOMES

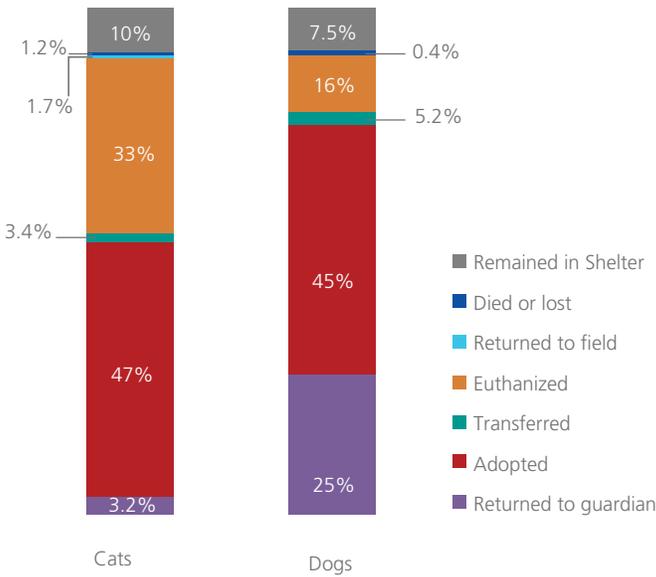


Figure 4. Outcomes of animals in 2013 relative to total shelter population

Figure 4 presents the outcomes of cats and dogs as a percentage of total shelter population. Figures 5 to 7 show the specific outcomes as rates relative to total intake and provide comparisons to previous data collected since 2007. Finally, the Appendix lists the absolute numbers of animals by category.

## Returned to Guardian

A quarter of dogs taken in by shelters were returned to their guardians, a significantly higher fraction than for cats (Figure 4). Figure 5 shows that this difference in returned to guardian (RTG) rates for cats and dogs has been fairly consistent since 2007. Generally, 25 to 30% of dogs are returned to their guardians compared to less than 5% of cats.

Comparing the number of animals returned to guardians to the number of stray animals taken in provides a gauge of the number of lost animals that are returned to their guardians. In 2013 the RTG/stray ratio was only 6% for cats and 56% for dogs. One approach to improving RTG rates may be to provide permanent identification prior to adoption. Of the organizations surveyed in 2013, 86% microchip prior to adoption as a policy; this is a slight improvement over the 83% reported in 2012. Explanations for the RTG/stray ratio difference between cats and dogs are that a subset of cats may be mischaracterized as “stray” when they actually have no guardians; the rate of abandonment (in the street) could be higher for cats than dogs; and the value of cats could generally be lower than that of dogs, such that less effort is made to find stray cats compared to stray dogs.

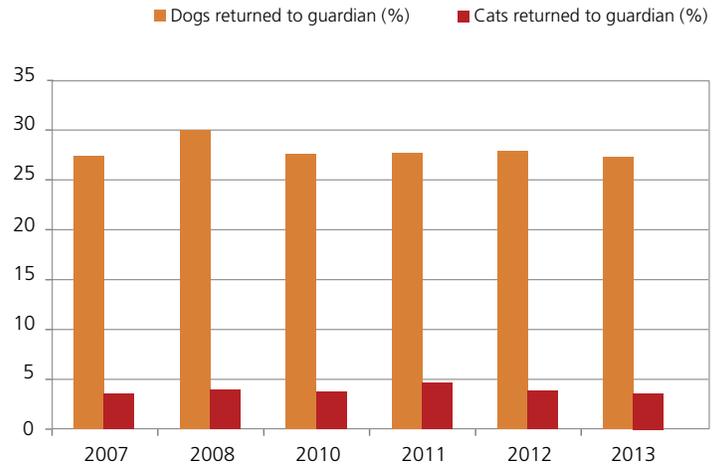


Figure 5. Percentage of cats and dogs returned to guardian relative to total intake

## Adoption

In 2013 adoption rates were very similar for cats and dogs at 47% and 45%, respectively, relative to the total shelter population (Figure 4). Adoption rates for cats have increased in 2013 relative to previous years and are at the highest levels yet observed (Figure 6).

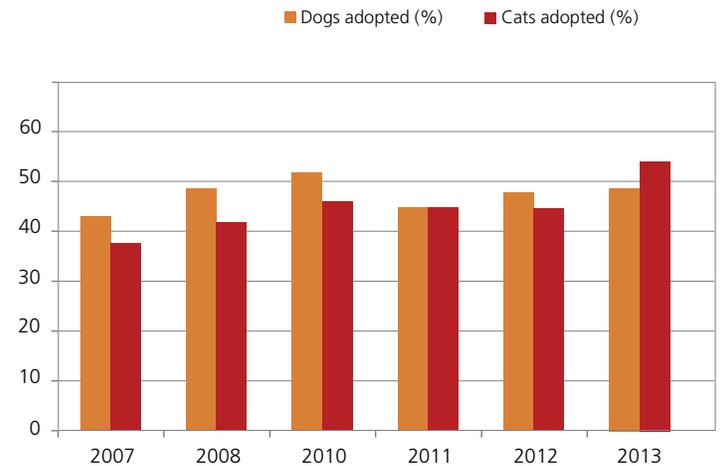


Figure 6. Percentage of cats and dogs adopted relative to total intake

# OUTCOMES

## Euthanasia

Euthanasia numbers for cats and dogs continued to differ markedly in 2013. On the positive side, significantly fewer cats were euthanized in 2013 than in 2012. In 2013, 38,000 cats and 8,000 dogs taken in to shelters were euthanized (Appendix) compared with over 52,000 cats and almost 9,000 dogs in 2012 (CFHS, 2013). In general the euthanasia rates appear to be decreasing relative to 2007 and 2008 levels, particularly for cats (Figure 7). Unfortunately, euthanasia rates for cats have been consistently twice as high as those for dogs over the last 20 years. This dire situation reflects the cat overpopulation crisis in Canada, which is described extensively in CFHS's *Cats in Canada* report (CFHS, 2012).

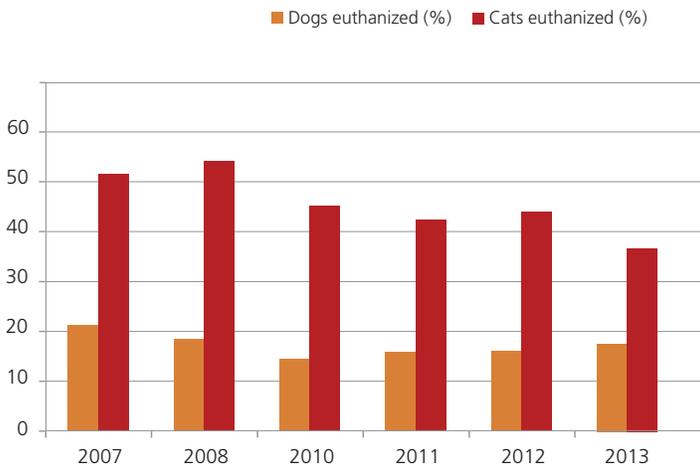


Figure 7. Percentage of cats and dogs euthanized relative to total intake

The number of healthy cats euthanized has been higher than the number of healthy dogs euthanized since 2008, when the CFHS first reported results of that survey category. A slightly higher proportion of both healthy cats and dogs were euthanized in 2013 compared to 2012 (Figure 8).

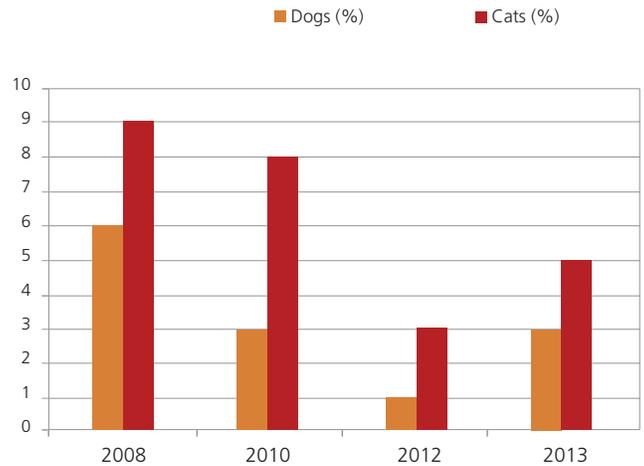


Figure 8. Percentage of cats and dogs euthanized who were healthy

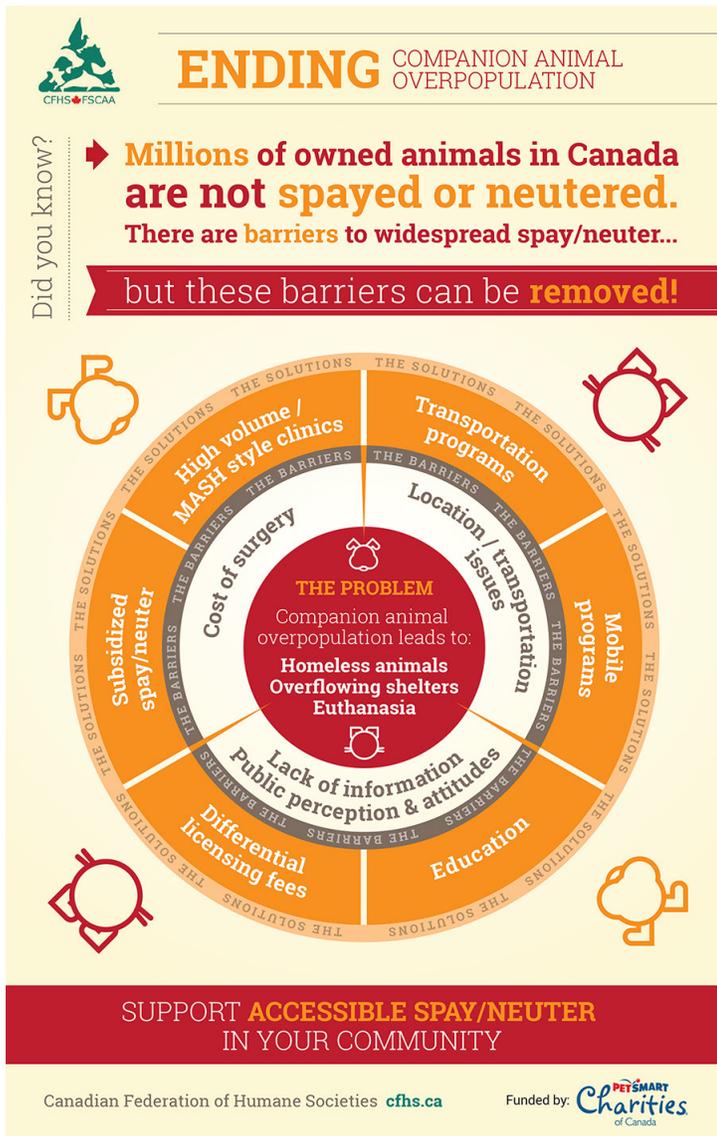
## Remaining in Shelter

Figure 4 includes the percentage of incoming cats and dogs that remained in the shelter. The welfare and healthy socialization of animals that remain in shelter for long periods of time may be compromised. Therefore, this category could anticipate a less satisfactory eventual outcome, depending on the length of stay. Technically, the category "Remained in shelter" includes animals in foster care that are still under the responsibility of a shelter; conditions for animals in foster care might be healthier or less stressful than in busy shelters. To gain a better sense of the length of time animals typically spend in shelters, the CFHS will include a question in future surveys regarding the average length of stay in shelter.

## Who is the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies?

The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS) is a national organization representing humane societies and SPCAs in Canada. Founded in 1957, the CFHS works toward positive, progressive change to end animal cruelty, improve animal protection, and promote the humane treatment of all animals. As the convener and representative of the largest animal welfare community in Canada, the CFHS advances the welfare of companion animals, farm animals, wildlife, and animals in research with a strong national voice promoting the interests and concerns of animal welfare to government, policy makers, industry, and the public.

# SPAY/NEUTER



According to this year's survey, 97% of responding shelters spay or neuter animals in their care before adoption as a matter of policy. Almost 25,000 cats and over 8,500 dogs were spayed or neutered while at shelters in 2013. By ensuring that every animal that can be is sterilized before adoption, humane societies and SPCAs are making a significant contribution to addressing companion animal overpopulation, the results of which they must grimly face on a daily basis. Going even further, 37% of responding shelters offer sterilization services for owned animals. Through such programs over 10,500 owned cats and over 3,000 owned dogs were also spayed or neutered in 2013. As well, a number of responding shelters are starting to implement Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) programs where feral cats are sterilized before being returned to their outdoor or barn homes. An additional 1,900 cats were sterilized by shelters in 2013 through TNR programs.

The spay/neuter status of animals that are taken in to shelters is an interesting indicator of the level of sterilization of companion animals nationally. In 2013 only 10% of cats and 9% of dogs that were surrendered by their guardians were already sterilized, and just 3% of cats and 5% of dogs taken in as strays were already sterilized.

The high proportion of intact animals surrendered or taken in as stray could be interpreted in a number of ways. These categories could represent populations of animals whose guardians are less informed about responsible pet guardianship or do not have the means to provide their companion animal with veterinary care and, as a result, did not invest in sterilization surgery. Alternatively, being intact may have resulted in behaviours leading to the animal roaming or being abandoned. In all cases, more widespread education and accessible spay/neuter initiatives are needed. Considering that 38% of felines taken in to shelters are kittens, the need to address sterilization in cats is particularly urgent, and the most progressive practices should be adopted, including pediatric spay/neuter where appropriate.

Figure 9. Infographic produced by the CFHS as part of the Accessible Spay/Neuter project [www.cfhs.ca/athome/accessible\\_spay\\_and\\_neuter/](http://www.cfhs.ca/athome/accessible_spay_and_neuter/)

# CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The data in the 2013 shelter survey was collected from humane societies and SPCAs and thus represents only a fraction of establishments that shelter animals in Canada. Nevertheless, this data set represents the best information about companion animals in Canadian shelters the CFHS is aware of.

Based on responses received from 90 humane societies and SPCAs, the situation of cats in shelters in Canada is still far worse than that of dogs. More than twice as many cats enter shelters than dogs, and though adoption rates for cats are similar to those for dogs, fewer cats are reclaimed and many more are euthanized. The proportion of felines taken in as juveniles is more than twice that for canines. This situation is reflective of the feline overpopulation crisis addressed comprehensively in CFHS's *Cats in Canada* report (CFHS, 2012). The report outlines an extensive list of recommendations for different stakeholders to address this grave problem.

Looking at the 2013 statistics, there may be reason for optimism that the tide is turning. **The situation in shelters in Canada may be on a gradually improving trend, particularly for cats. Relative to past years, fewer cats were taken in by shelters, feline adoption rates showed an increase, and feline euthanasia rates have decreased.** If this trend continues, it may mean the diligent efforts of those organizations implementing spay/neuter, progressive sheltering, and educational initiatives have started to yield rewards.

Almost all of the responding organizations sterilize animals prior to adoption. This constitutes a tremendous effort to stem unwanted litters, particularly given how many animals come in to shelters intact. **The CFHS recommends that all shelters, SPCAs, humane societies, and rescue**

**organizations incorporate a mandatory spay/neuter program as part of their companion animal adoption procedures. Furthermore, widespread education and accessible spay/neuter initiatives must be implemented across the country.**

While there has been an increase in the proportion of shelters that provide permanent identification before adoption, there continues to be room for improvement. **The CFHS encourages shelters to offer permanent identification, such as microchipping, as a method of improving the number of stray animals that are returned to their guardians. In order for microchipping to be an effective method for reuniting companion animals with their guardians, it is essential that guardians maintain current contact information in the microchip company's database. As well, additional efforts to search for lost animals should be undertaken.** A number of shelters actively engage in such efforts to assist stray animals and their guardians.

**Finally, the CFHS strongly encourages more organizations to collect data regarding the animals under their care and to share this data by participating in CFHS's national shelter surveys.** With only 52% of the 172 humane societies and SPCAs in Canada responding to the survey, the picture of homeless companion animals' situation in Canada is incomplete. An accurate and relevant national picture of companion animal welfare and of the value of humane societies and SPCAs in safeguarding it requires extensive participation of the sheltering community. The heartrending crisis of companion animal overpopulation will never be solved without recognition that it is a community-wide problem whose solution entails open communication on the basis of solid evidence.

## References

Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (2013). *Animal Shelter Statistics 2012*. Retrieved from [http://cfhs.ca/athome/shelter\\_animal\\_statistics/](http://cfhs.ca/athome/shelter_animal_statistics/)

Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (2012). *Cats in Canada: A comprehensive report on the cat overpopulation crisis*. Retrieved from [http://cfhs.ca/athome/cat\\_overpopulation\\_crisis/](http://cfhs.ca/athome/cat_overpopulation_crisis/)

Lola

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Graphic design courtesy of Lola Design

# APPENDIX

Aggregate total number of animals reported by survey respondents

	CATS	DOGS	OTHER SPECIES	TOTAL*
<b>Beginning Count</b>	12,374	4,090	1,568	18,359
<b>2013 Intake</b>				
TOTAL*	103,433	46,578	14,724	170,989
Fraction juvenile	38%	17%		
Stray	61,749	22,942	5,432	90,397
Owner-surrender	29,170	15,587	4,089	49,529
Cases of abuse	1,959	1,407	635	3,981
Transfers	7,285	4,885	1,247	13,575
Born	1,836	292	132	2,215
<b>Outcomes - Live Releases</b>				
Adopted	54,684	23,001	5,056	83,070
Transfers	3,947	2,647	1,871	8,683
Returned to guardian	3,648	12,900	299	15,992
Returned to guardian/Stray	6%	56%		
<b>Outcomes - Euthanasia</b>				
Total*	38,639	8,118	4,397	47,902
Healthy	2,482	236	157	3,040
Unhealthy & Untreatable	21,808	5,651	2,270	27,260
Owner requested	2,886	1,852	285	2,645
<b>Outcomes - Other</b>				
Died in care	1,299	196	438	1,907
Lost in care	82	18	2	94
<b>End Count</b>	6,215	2,059	1,345	9,245
<b>Spay/Neuter</b>				
Number of animals spayed/ neutered while at the shelter	24,942	8,546	634	38,260

\* Note that the Totals reported may not necessarily be the exact sum of the other categories