



CFHS  FSCAA

60TH ANNIVERSARY
1957-2017

Animal Shelter Statistics

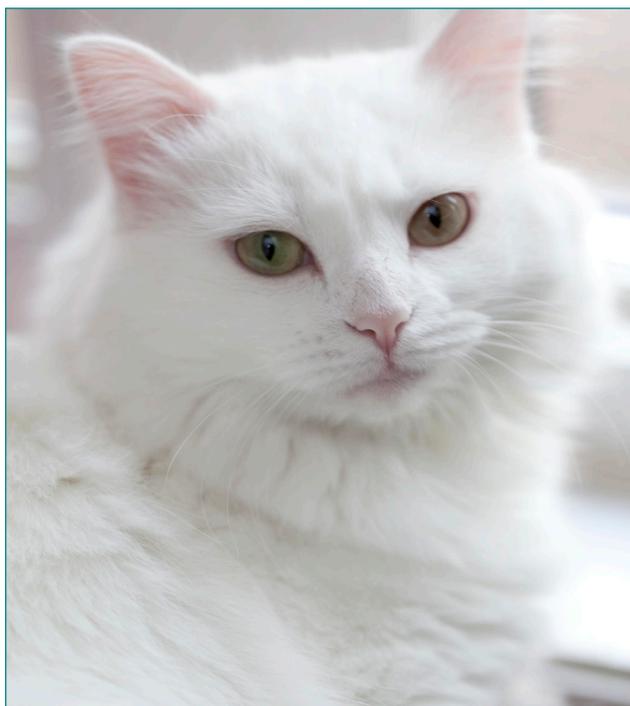
Report published December 14, 2016

2015



SUCCESS STORY: Sammy and Sasha are a bonded pair who were adopted together from the Stratford-Perth Humane Society.

Introduction



The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS) has been collecting data about shelter animals from humane societies and SPCAs across Canada for more than twenty years, in order to compile national statistics and monitor trends. No other Canadian organization is tracking the situation of such a large proportion of homeless animals in Canada. As a result, this data set represents the best snapshot of the situation of Canadian shelter animals.

This report presents the results of the CFHS survey for 2015. A comparison to the statistics from past years shows a continuation of the positive trends previously reported, revealing better outcomes overall for homeless companion animals in Canada.

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, 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, 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.

ON THE COVER: SASHA & SAMMY

Sammy, an 11-year-old Yorkshire terrier, and Sasha, an 11-year-old Welsh Corgi (see cover), are a bonded pair who came to the Kitchener-Waterloo Humane Society in January 2016. Their owner's health was failing, and she was unable to care for them any longer. They were put up for adoption as a bonded pair, as separating them after 11 years was not the humane thing to do.

Community members showed a lot of interest in Sammy, as he was handsome and had a tongue that would hang out the side of his mouth in excitement. Sammy was outgoing and friendly, where Sasha was shy and timid. Anyone who spent five minutes with them could see that Sammy was constantly protecting and looking out for Sasha. After two months at the Kitchener-Waterloo Humane Society, they were moved to the Stratford-Perth Humane Society for more exposure.

Sammy and Sasha finally got lucky in April 2016 and found their forever home to live out their senior years together. It's not clear who was luckier – Sammy and Sasha, or their new owner!

The Data Set

For the collection of 2015 data, CFHS conducted a survey between March and September 2016. Requests to complete the survey were sent to the 170 shelters operated by humane societies and SPCAs across the country (Table 1). Responses were received from 89 of these shelters, corresponding to 52% of target organizations. Of the 89 responding shelters, 71 are operated by CFHS member societies (Figure 1). Responses were received from shelters in all provinces and territories except Manitoba and Nunavut.

Throughout this report, the term “shelter” is used to refer to humane societies and SPCAs operating facilities for transitional housing of homeless animals. While the term may more generally encompass other establishments that also shelter homeless animals, such as 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 represent only a fraction of homeless companion animals in Canada.

FIGURE 1. Responses to the CFHS 2015 shelter survey from 170 humane society and SPCA shelters in Canada.

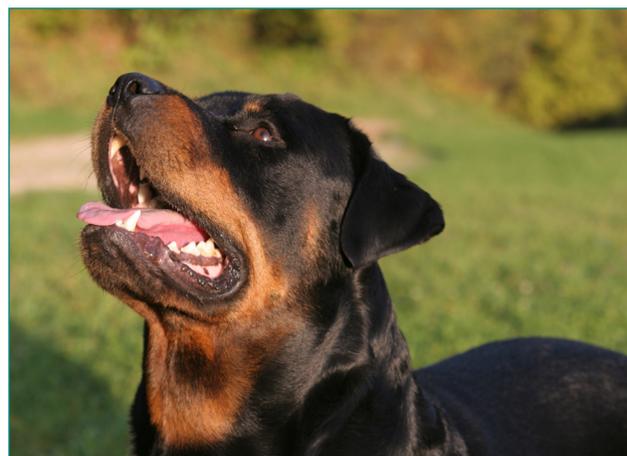
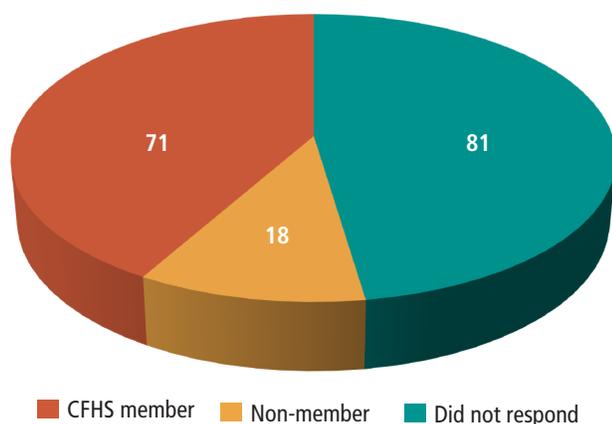


TABLE 1. Number of humane society and SPCA shelters in Canada, by province or territory.

| Province or territory | Number* |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Alberta | 18 |
| British Columbia | 39 |
| Manitoba | 6 |
| New Brunswick | 10 |
| Newfoundland and Labrador | 8 |
| Northwest Territories | 2 |
| Nova Scotia | 6 |
| Nunavut | 1 |
| Ontario | 48 |
| Prince Edward Island | 1 |
| Quebec | 16 |
| Saskatchewan | 13 |
| Yukon | 2 |
| TOTAL | 170 |

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

Intake

Intake refers to the total number of cats and dogs received by shelters. In 2015, Canadian shelters took in more than 82,000 cats and 35,000 dogs, slightly fewer than in the previous year (Appendix, Figure 2). To correct for the different number of organizations that have responded to the survey over the years, the average number of animals taken in per organization can be compared from year to year. Using the average, the numbers of cats and dogs taken in per organization are slightly less than the values from 2014 (Figure 3) and it seems the recent declining trend in animals coming to humane society and SPCA shelters may be levelling off.

As observed in previous years, the number of cats taken in to Canadian shelters is almost twice the number of dogs.

The overall declining trend over the years in the number of animals taken in to humane society and SPCA shelters may be an indication of fewer homeless animals in Canada. Another factor may be that agencies that are not accounted for in the CFHS survey, for example rescue organizations, are taking in a larger proportion of homeless animals. It could also be that Canadian organizations are implementing innovative intake management strategies, such as those included in the *Capacity for Care* model (CFHS, 2016a; see Intake Management box).

INTAKE MANAGEMENT

More and more humane societies and SPCAs are recognizing that, in order to prevent the number of cats in care from overtaking the shelter's capacity to provide conditions that meet basic needs, they must manage the intake of cats. Rather than accepting any surrendered cat at any time, appointments are scheduled to take in surrendered cats when the shelter's capacity permits it.

With regard to outdoor cats, in the past, some shelters may have taken in all who were brought to their shelter, even if this resulted in overcrowding and stressful conditions that had a negative impact on the health and welfare of the entire shelter population. It is now understood to be a better practice to allow healthy, unowned outdoor cats to remain in their home location where they are thriving. Not only does this reduce the risk of overcrowding in the shelter, it also helps maintain the number of cats available at the shelter to a level that promotes speedier adoption, rather than prolonging their length of stay (CFHS, 2016a).

FIGURE 2.
Total intake of cats and dogs to shelters.

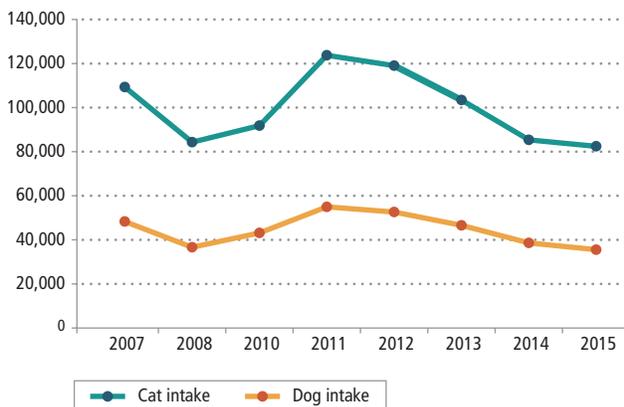
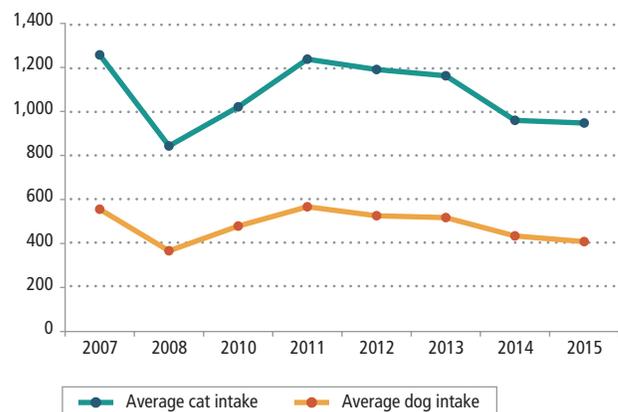


FIGURE 3.
Average intake per reporting organization.



Intake

Sources of intake

Figure 4 presents the various sources of cats and dogs as a percentage of total intake by Canadian shelters in 2015. The distribution of major categories is quite similar to previous years. The majority of animals were taken in as stray (45% of dog intake and 48% of cat intake, respectively). While the proportion of stray dogs remained the same, the proportion of cats taken in as stray has been declining in recent years, from 53% of intake in 2014 (CFHS, 2015) and 60% in 2013 (CFHS, 2014). This could reflect a change in intake management policy for cats.

The second largest category was those surrendered by their guardians (33% of dog intake and 30% of cat intake, respectively).

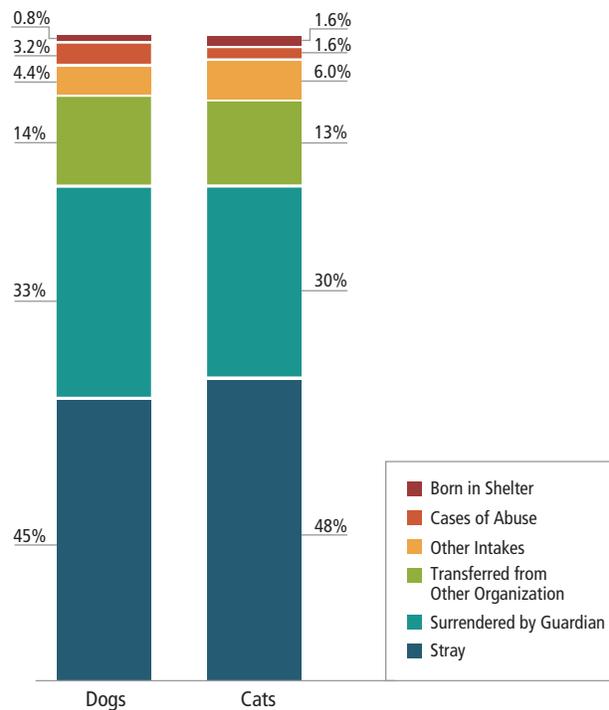
Transfers continue to make up the third largest category (see “Transfers” section on page 8). The proportion of dogs transferred in remained at 14% while the proportion of cats transferred in continued to increase relative to previous years, at 13% in 2015, compared to 10% in 2014 (CFHS, 2015) and 7% in 2013 (CFHS, 2014). A higher proportion of animals were identified as “other intakes” in 2015, suggesting organizations are classifying their intake categories more finely.

Age at intake

In 2015, 69 of 89 responding organizations were able to identify incoming animals as adult or juvenile. The proportions were very similar to previous years, at 38% of felines and 18% of canines taken in as juveniles.



FIGURE 4. Sources of intake of cats and dogs in 2015.



Outcomes

The various outcomes for cats and dogs relative to total shelter population are given in Figure 5. Subsequent figures present the percentage of animals with specific outcomes and provide comparisons to values from past years. Finally, the Appendix lists the absolute numbers of animals by category. As with intake categories, the proportions of different outcomes for cats and dogs are very similar to those observed in recent years.

Return to guardian

As a proportion of total intake, 29% of dogs and 5% of cats were returned to their guardians in 2015, which is consistent with the general range observed in previous years: 25-30% for dogs and 5% or fewer for cats. Figure 6 shows a better indicator, the percentage of *stray* cats or dogs that were returned to their guardians, over the last several years for which this ratio has been reported. In 2015, 68% of stray dogs and 11% of stray cats were reclaimed.

FIGURE 5.
Outcomes of cats and dogs in 2015, relative to total shelter population.

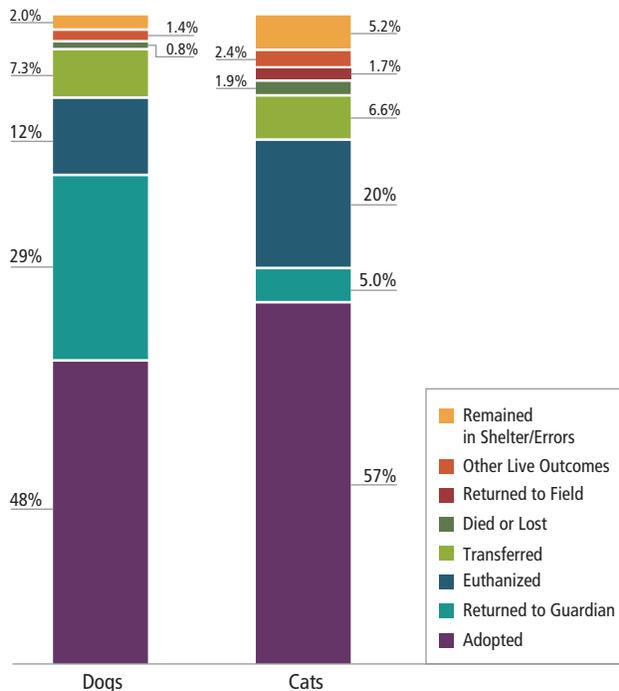
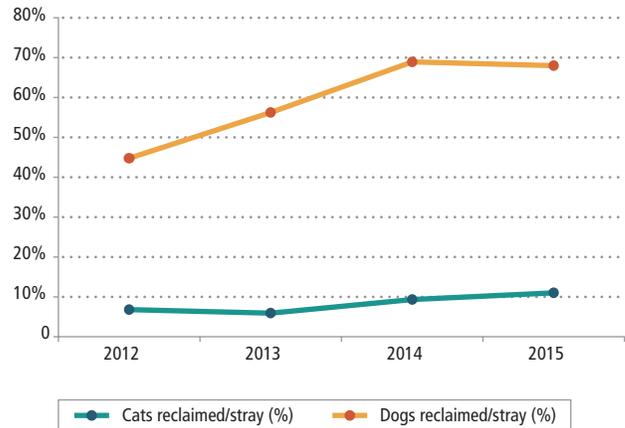


FIGURE 6.
Percentage of stray cats and dogs returned to guardian.



PUBLIC AWARENESS: PET IDENTIFICATION

A 2015 Canada Post Love Your Pet stamp set, developed with CFHS, highlights responsible pet guardianship. One of the five stamps in the set raises awareness about providing effective identification for companion animals.



Outcomes

The drastic difference between the proportions of stray cats versus dogs that were returned to their guardians may be explained by a number of reasons: a subset of cats could be mischaracterized as “stray” when they actually have no guardians; the rate of abandonment could be higher for cats than dogs; and the perceived value of cats could generally be lower than that of dogs, such that less effort is made to provide identification for cats.

The slow but increasing trend in the proportion of stray cats reclaimed may inspire a sense of optimism that the message about providing identification for cats is reaching more of the public (for example, see Pet Identification box). In 2015, 13 of 89 responding organizations tracked the number of animals returned home who had permanent identification (microchips or tattoos). In this small sample, 14% of cats and 21% of dogs who were reunited with their families were noted to have permanent identification at the time of their intake.

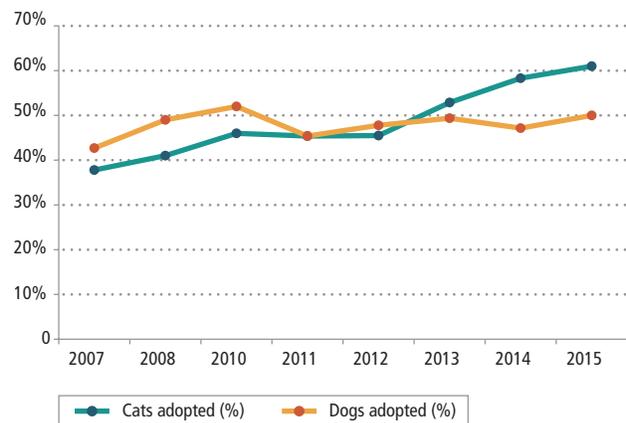
Humane societies and SPCAs are doing their part to ensure that animals adopted at their shelters are equipped to find their way home should they stray; of the 89 organizations who responded to the survey, 83% provide permanent identification to their animals prior to adopting them out, with the vast majority providing microchips.



Adoption

Adoption is the largest outcome category; 48% of dogs and 57% of cats were adopted in 2015 (Figure 5). For the third consecutive year, the adoption rate for cats surpassed that for dogs, and was at the highest level yet observed (Figure 7; CFHS, 2016b). The dog adoption rate appears more or less steady.

FIGURE 7. Percentage of cats and dogs adopted relative to total intake.



SUCCESS STORY: BRITZ & BURKE

Britz and Burke are a bonded pair of hoarding survivors. They came into the care of the Red Deer & District SPCA on December 24, 2014 after being rescued from some of the poorest hoarding conditions that any animal has ever had to endure. They spent more than a year at the Red Deer shelter, waiting for the right family to give them a second chance as a bonded pair whose devotion to one another could not be broken. The staff, volunteers and guests gave them lots of special love and attention, but a shelter is not a home.

Finally, on August 11, 2016 all of their hopes and dreams came true when a wonderful family agreed to give the home that they have always deserved.

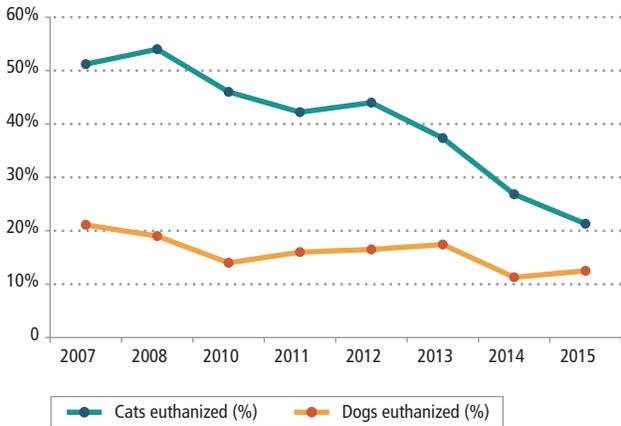
Outcomes

Euthanasia

Overall, humane societies and SPCAs reported many fewer animals euthanized in 2015 than in recent years: 2,820 dogs and 15,341 cats compared to 4,358 dogs and 22,908 cats in 2014 (CFHS, 2015). The proportion of cats taken in who were euthanized was also lower, continuing the ongoing trend noted in previous years (Figure 8). The euthanasia rate for dogs was slightly higher than in 2014.

With regard to euthanasia of healthy animals, the fraction of cats euthanized who were healthy was slightly higher than in recent years, while the fraction of dogs euthanized who were healthy remained similar to previous years (Figure 9). Once again in 2015, humane society and SPCA data indicate the situation is improving for cats, suggesting concerted efforts to address cat overpopulation are producing favourable results.

FIGURE 8. Percentage of cats and dogs euthanized relative to total intake.



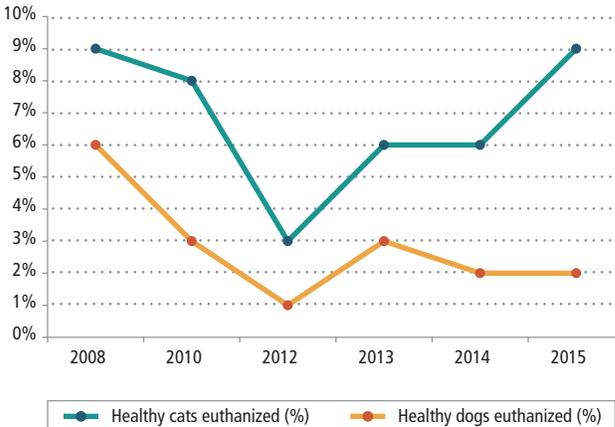
Transfers

In order to increase the likelihood of adoption, many humane societies and SPCAs transfer animals to other facilities or partnering organizations where there is higher demand. This year, transfer rates for cats and dogs were very similar, with animals transferred in making up approximately 13% of total intake and animals transferred out consisting of about 7% of the shelter population. The number of animals transferred appears to be increasing slightly relative to previous years, particularly for cats.

Approximately two-thirds of respondents this year tracked *where* animals were transferred from or to, and whether it was within or outside their community. This may help to identify whether animals are travelling farther afield to find adoptive homes.

For transfers into the shelter, a relatively equal proportion of dogs came from within the community as from outside the community, while 75% of cats transferred were from within the community compared to 25% from outside the community. For outgoing transfers, 66% of dogs were transferred outside the community, compared to 33% who stayed within the community; 90% of cats stayed within the community, compared to only 10% who were transferred outside the community.

FIGURE 9. Percentage of cats and dogs euthanized who were healthy.



Outcomes

The differences in incoming and outgoing rates reflect the fact that some transfers are expected to be taking place between responding and non-responding societies or between surveyed humane societies and SPCAs and non-surveyed entities, such as rescue organizations. The contrasting transfer patterns for cats and dogs may be caused by particular regional breed preferences or breed-specific legislation for dogs, which result in longer travel to find adoptive homes.

Return to Field

As noted above, many cat sheltering organizations recognize that, in order to prevent the number of cats in care from overtaking the shelter's capacity to provide conditions that meet basic needs, they must manage the intake of cats.

More shelters are adopting the practice of allowing healthy, unowned outdoor cats to remain in their home location where they are thriving rather than bringing them into a shelter that risks becoming overcrowded. To address the causes of overpopulation, these organizations implement programs to sterilize such cats and then "return them to the field". During this time, vaccinations and any required medical treatment are also provided. The number of felines returned to the field was reported by 69 of 89 respondents in 2015. They indicated that, collectively, about 2% of all cats taken in to shelters were returned to the field.

Length of Stay

Figure 5 includes a category of dogs and cats that remained in the shelter. This proportion, at 2% for dogs and 5% for cats, is less than reported in previous years. If animals do indeed remain in the shelter for long periods, their health, welfare and behaviour may be compromised. Technically, this category also includes animals in foster care that are still under the responsibility of the shelter, and conditions for animals in foster care are typically less stressful and healthier than those in busy shelters. It is important to note that any miscounts or errors in tracking outcome data would be captured in this category.



Fewer animals, and particularly fewer cats, were in the shelter at the beginning of 2015 compared to previous years. This could be another indication that, overall, animals had a shorter length of stay and were not languishing in shelters. Respondents also provided data on the length of stay of shelter animals, which was very similar to that reported for 2014: the average length of stay for dogs and cats was 26 days and 44 days, respectively, and the median length of stay was 14 days and 24 days, respectively.

Spay/Neuter

More than 90% of responding shelters spay or neuter animals in their care before adoption as a matter of policy. In 2015, responding organizations spayed or neutered 29,412 cats and 8,888 dogs. By ensuring that every possible shelter animal is sterilized before adoption, these organizations are taking responsibility for the companion animal overpopulation crisis. Another 19,558 owned animals were sterilized through programs offered by humane societies and SPCAs.

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 2015, 70% of responding organizations tracked the sterilization status of animals entering their shelters. Collectively, for all guardian-surrendered and stray animals taken in, 33% of dogs and 25% of cats were already sterilized at the time of their intake.

Conclusion

Data from 89 humane society and SPCA shelters collected for the year 2015 once again indicate that the situation of shelter animals is improving — particularly for cats. This suggests efforts by humane societies and SPCAs across Canada to address cat overpopulation are reaping their rewards. Of note:

- There is an overall declining trend in the number of animals taken in to humane society and SPCA shelters. This may be an indication that there are fewer homeless animals in Canada. It may also indicate that more organizations are following the practice of not taking in as many healthy, unowned outdoor cats when the cats would fare better outside than in the shelter. Alternatively, rescue organizations that are not characterized as humane societies or SPCAs may be taking in an increasing number of animals that are not accounted for in the CFHS survey.
- The proportion of cats taken in as stray has been declining in recent years. In addition, there is an increasing trend in the proportion of stray cats who are reclaimed. These observations inspire a sense of optimism that the message to provide identification for cats is reaching more of the public. Humane societies and SPCAs are helping with the effort to provide identification: 83% of responding organizations provide permanent identification to their animals prior to adopting them out, with the vast majority providing microchips.
- For the third consecutive year, the adoption rate for cats both increased relative to the previous year and surpassed that for dogs. The cat adoption rate is at the highest level yet observed.
- Humane societies and SPCAs reported many fewer animals euthanized in 2015 than in recent years. The proportion of cats euthanized relative to those taken in was also lower, continuing the ongoing trend noted in previous years.
- The number of animals transferred continued to increase relative to previous years, particularly with regards to cats, which suggests greater networking and resourcefulness to achieve successful outcomes for homeless animals.

CFHS is pleased that the participation of humane societies and SPCAs has allowed for ongoing tracking of trends in the intake and outcome of homeless animals being brought to these shelters in Canada. Thanks to consistent, ongoing contributions, a positive evidence-based picture of the situation of animals in Canadian shelters is emerging. However, there is a need for more organizations to collect and share data through the CFHS' national survey in order to fully understand the situation of this segment of Canadian animals and the issues they face.

CFHS would like to see every humane society and SPCA in Canada contribute data to this initiative and looks forward to extending participation to other segments of the sheltering community so as to create an accurate and relevant picture of homeless companion animal welfare and the value that animal sheltering organizations provide in Canadian society.

In particular, CFHS recommends that all organizations adopt a standardized approach, as well as parameters and definitions for data collection. Ongoing discussions in Canada (O'Connor *et al*, 2016) have indicated the *Basic Data Matrix* is a well-conceived choice that sheltering organizations can adopt (Shelter Animals Count, 2015). This matrix forms the basis for CFHS' annual data collection and has been taken up by the American organization, Shelter Animals Count, a growing initiative with more than 3,800 participating U.S. shelters at the time of writing and which has the potential and vision to become international in scope.

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. In working to create lasting change in animal welfare, it is critical to start with those animals closest to us, those for whom we have, arguably, the greatest responsibility: our companion animals. Leading organizations must demonstrate best practices and professionalism as an industry, and this includes evidence-based analysis and advocacy. Only then can we find lasting solutions.

Appendix

Aggregate total number of animals reported by survey respondents

| | CATS | DOGS | OTHER | TOTAL |
|--|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| Beginning Count | 5,452 | 1,853 | 1,121 | 8,426 |
| 2015 Intake | | | | |
| TOTAL* | 82,436 | 35,550 | 14,142 | 139,433 |
| Fraction Juvenile | 38% | 18% | | |
| Stray | 39,340 | 15,830 | 2,919 | 58,089 |
| Surrendered by Guardian | 22,218 | 10,043 | 4,437 | 36,698 |
| Cases of Abuse | 1,347 | 1,136 | 2,909 | 5,604 |
| Transfers | 10,838 | 4,949 | 1,500 | 17,287 |
| Born | 1,280 | 297 | 445 | 2,022 |
| Outcomes - Live Releases | | | | |
| Adopted | 50,275 | 17,782 | 6,163 | 74,220 |
| Transfers | 5,818 | 2,728 | 1,916 | 10,462 |
| Returned to Guardian | 4,389 | 10,855 | 267 | 15,511 |
| Returned to Guardian / Stray | 11% | 69% | | |
| Feline Returned to Field | 1,471 | | | |
| Outcomes - Euthanasia | | | | |
| Total Shelter Euthanasia* | 15,341 | 2,820 | 2,816 | 20,977 |
| Healthy | 759 | 39 | 1,092 | 1,890 |
| Unhealthy and Untreatable | 7,549 | 2,034 | 1,329 | 10,912 |
| Owner-requested** | 2,202 | 1,606 | 234 | 4,042 |
| Outcomes - Other | | | | |
| Died in care | 1,621 | 301 | 345 | 2,267 |
| Lost in care | 77 | 14 | 21 | 112 |
| End Count | 4,792 | 1,674 | 2,074 | 8,540 |
| Spay-Neuter | | | | |
| Number of animals spayed/neutered while at the shelter | 29,412 | 8,888 | 997 | 39,297 |
| Number of owned animals spayed/neutered | 15,400 | 4,120 | 38 | 19,558 |

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

** Owner-requested euthanasia is not included in total shelter euthanasia

References

Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (2016a). *Capacity for Care (C4C) Case Studies: 2016 Update*. Retrieved from http://cfhs.ca/athome/capacity_for_care/

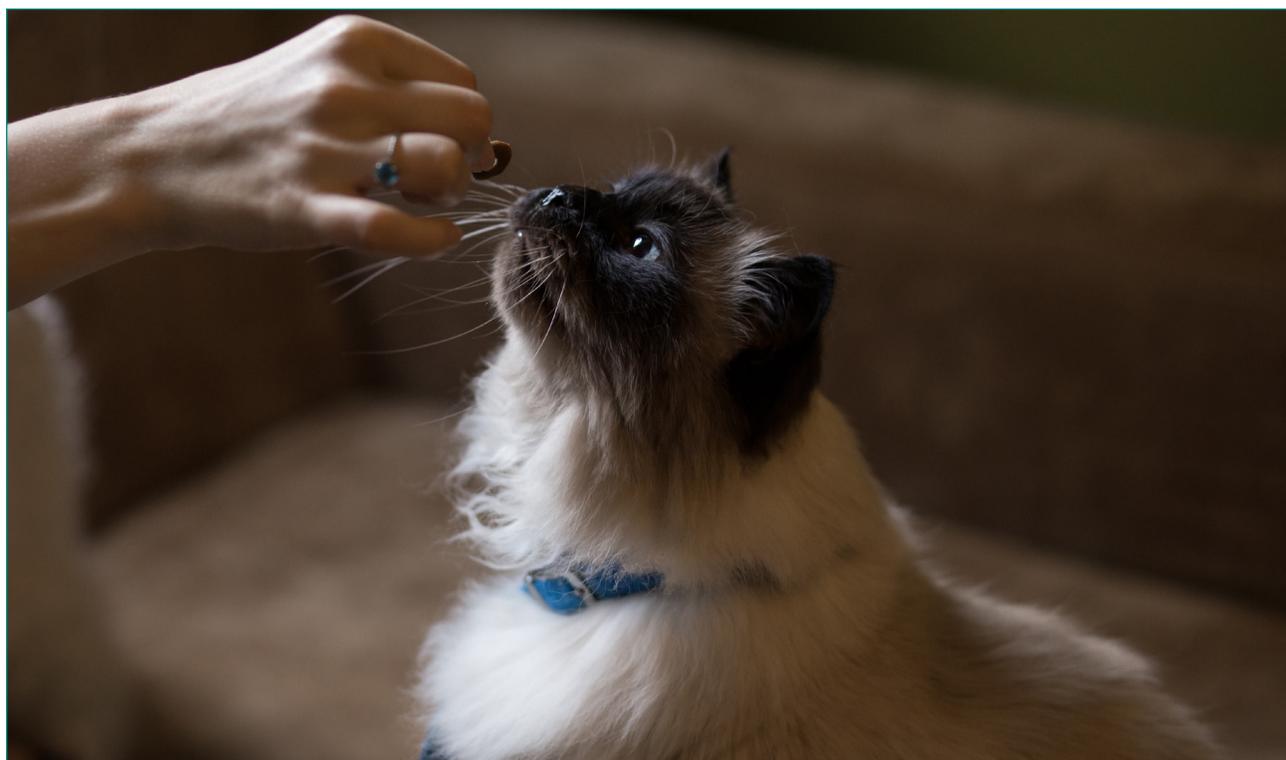
Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (2016b). *Comparison of Shelter Statistics, 1993-2015*. Retrieved from http://cfhs.ca/athome/shelter_animal_statistics/

Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (2015). *Animal Shelter Statistics 2014*. Retrieved from http://cfhs.ca/athome/shelter_animal_statistics/

Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (2014). *Animal Shelter Statistics 2013*. Retrieved from http://cfhs.ca/athome/shelter_animal_statistics/

O'Connor, R., Rastogi, T., & Paradis, V. (2016, April). *The Importance of Standardized Shelter Data in Animal Welfare: Regional Initiatives*. Panel discussion at the 2016 CFHS National Animal Welfare Conference, Toronto, ON.

Shelter Animals Count: The National database project (2015). *The Data Matrix*. Retrieved from <http://shelteranimalscount.org/data>



Canadian Federation of Humane Societies
Fédération des sociétés canadiennes d'assistance aux animaux

© 2016, Canadian Federation of Humane Societies