



THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HSUS SHELTER ADVOCATE TOOLKIT

What Is “Normal”? Understanding What “Good” Shelter Practice Is and Isn’t

As with any profession, the inner workings of a shelter are more complex than they may appear from the outside. There may be valid reasons why, for example, some cages at your local shelter are empty (a few cages may need to be kept open to animal control to drop off strays that are picked up in the community at any given time, or filling every cage may put the shelter over its humane capacity for care of animals), or why your animal control agency may not release feral cats back into the community (there may be an ordinance that expressly prevents it -- they may even already be in the process of working to change that ordinance). To understand the science behind caring for a population of animals, and how to distinguish between a shelter doing the best it can with the resources it has and a shelter that is not doing all that it should to save lives, consult the following resources. All shelter professionals can reasonably be expected to know and use these tools. Then ask your shelter management about how they are applying these principles and guidelines in their facilities.

Best Practices for Shelters and Rescues

- The 5 Freedoms: To live a good quality life, all animals, regardless of whether they reside in a home, kennel, laboratory, farm or shelter, must have all “5 Freedoms:” Freedom from Hunger & Thirst, Freedom from Discomfort, Freedom from Pain, Injury & Disease, Freedom to Express Normal Behaviors, and Freedom from Fear & Distress.
 - http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/pets/shelter-advocate-toolkit/the_5_freedoms.pdf
 - http://www.animalsheltering.org/resources/magazine/mar_apr_2008/shelter_medicine_defining_quality_of_life.pdf
- Association of Shelter Veterinarians’ (ASV) Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters: The ASV Guidelines for Standards of Care were developed by experts in the field of shelter medicine to raise the standard of animal care throughout the industry, meeting the needs of each individual animal without losing sight of the needs of the shelter population as a whole. They have been endorsed by The HSUS, ASPCA, National Animal Control Association (NACA), Society of Animal Welfare Administrators (SAWA), National Federation of Humane Societies (NFHS), and other animal welfare organizations.
<http://www.sheltervet.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=29>
- Maddie’s Fund webinar “Knowing Your Capacity for Humane Care”: A facility’s capacity is not defined by the number of cages it has but by the resources (staffing and otherwise) it has to provide humane care and housing. The Association of Shelter Veterinarians has expressly stated that organizations must never exceed their capacity for care, or animals will suffer.
http://www.maddiesfund.org/Resource_Library/Know_Your_Capacity_for_Humane_Care.html
- National Federation of Humane Societies’ (NFHS) Companion Animals Transport Programs -- Best Practices: The NFHS has established best practices for agencies that participate in programs that move shelter animals from one place to another, to ensure that their programs benefit communities, adopters,

shelters, and most importantly, the animals themselves.

<http://www.humanefederation.org/TransferBestPractice.cfm>

- There are also specific recommendations available for facilities that specialize in the care of birds, horses, and other animals, such as:
 - American Association of Equine Practitioners' Care Guidelines for Equine Rescue and Retirement Facilities: http://www.aeep.org/pdfs/rescue_retirement_guidelines.pdf

Animal Hoarding: An organization's decision to exceed its capacity for humane care can be disastrous for the animals because it virtually guarantees they will not be able to meet all 5 Freedoms. However, with so many animals in need it can be difficult for organizations to stay within their limits. Knowing the difference between quality sheltering and true hoarding is key to ensuring that an organization is not trying to do so much for so many animals that individual animals suffer.

- The Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium's Common Questions About Animal Hoarding: <http://vet.tufts.edu/hoarding/abthoard.htm#A5>
- "Rescued from Squalor" by Carrie Allen, All Animals Magazine July/August 2010
http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/publications/2010/julyaug2010/aa_julyaug2010_hoarding_pdf.pdf
- "A Matter of Measurement: Defining capacity and detecting crowding" by Dr. Kate Hurley, Animal Sheltering Magazine July/August 2008
http://www.animalsheltering.org/resources/magazine/jul_aug_2008/shelter_medicine_matter_of_measurement.pdf

Additional Professional Resources to consult:

- HSUS' resources for animal care professionals (www.animalsheltering.org)
- UC Davis' Koret Shelter Medicine Program (www.sheltermedicine.org)
- ASPCA's resources for animal care professionals (www.ASPCAPro.org)
- Maddie's Fund resources for animal care professionals (www.maddiesfund.org)
- HSUS' Animal Care EXPO, the world's largest international training conference for animal care providers (www.animalsheltering.org/expo)

Applicable State Laws, Regulations and Local Ordinances: Laws and ordinances specific to your jurisdiction may affect shelter policies and procedures. Contact your local State Veterinary Office or Department of Agriculture or visit <http://www.municode.com/Library> for local statutory and regulatory information.