

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AGENCY

200 N. Main Street, Suite 425, Los Angeles, CA, 90012

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EXECUTIVE

General Manager, Jonel C. Hill	Rm 410	213	485-2892
Executive Officer, Frank T. Martinez	Rm 409	213	485-2892
Executive Secretary, Shirley Pryor			
Executive Secretary, Mary Brown			
Assistant General Manager, Michael J. Galvin	Rm 408	213	485-2892
Assistant General Manager, William B. Hand	Rm. 413	213	485-2892
Assistant General Manager, Susan Herman	Rm. 412	213	485-2892
Assistant General Manager, Mary K. Kotzman	Rm. 411	213	485-2892
Acting Assistant General Manager,			
James M. Crain	Rm. 425	213	485-5100
General Information.....		213	485-2891
24-Hour Emergency Number		213	485-6744

HELP DESKS:

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FAX NUMBERS

CHE, 4th Floor, Executive Management		213	847-3512
CHE, 4th Floor, General Management		213	485-7443
CHE, Computer Center		213	485-8532
120 So. San Pedro,	Rm 600	213	847-7157
L.A. Mall Space 15		213	847-3887
207 So. Broadway, 7th Floor		213	485-7444
207 So. Broadway, 9th Floor		213	485-9837
250 E. 1st St., Room 1400		213	847-2286
221 N. Figueroa, 6th Floor		213	580-1232
419 So. Spring St., 10th Floor		213	893-8104
419 So. Spring St., 11th Floor		213	893-8725
Piper Technical Center, Space 140		213	485-8719
Piper Technical Center, Space 140-A		213	847-7200

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EXECUTIVE OFFICER, Frank T. MartinezRm. 425 213 485-2892

Administrative Services Division

Sharon Stenen, Division Manager	Rm. 425	213	485-3260
Fiscal Administration, Dee Dee Coultas, Manager		213	485-3260

Pet Over population problem - come to the wrong place. You can see the effect but not the cause of the problem.

Should be talking to backyard breeders, men who won't neuter because dog is extension of bio machismo, family lets golden breed so kids can see the miracle of birth.

Education the answer? Humane groups? DAZ no budget?

Animal shelters going 'no-kill'

The San Francisco humane society's policies are being copied across the nation, as shelters try to rehabilitate problem animals and promote more adoptions.

By Haya El Nasser
USA TODAY

9/8/97

Mangy dogs and lame cats dropped off at the San Francisco humane society get cured, groomed and even learn good manners while they await adoption.

In most shelters, they would be put to death within days.

But this "no-kill" philosophy embraced by San Francisco's Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals — the nation's most famous "no-kill" shelter — is beginning to sweep the country.

In the past five years, private, nonprofit humane societies in cities such as St. Louis, Milwaukee and New York are copying San Francisco by spending more of their donated dollars to rehabilitate animals and promote pet adoptions.

Many shelters now try to keep animals alive as long as they have room for them.

There are two types of "no-kill" shelters. Most take in the healthiest cats and dogs that are sure to find homes. San Francisco's humane society is the first in the USA to guarantee homes for sick and old animals. Even so, a small number of terminally ill or ferocious animals are put to death.

"The term 'no-kill' really is deceiving" if any animal is killed, says Vicky Crosetti of the Humane Society of the Tennessee Valley in Knoxville. "If an animal goes into a room and it's breathing and leaves the room not breathing, it's dead."

There are about 5,000 shelters in the USA. An estimated 700 call themselves "no-kill."

The "no-kill" movement has unleashed a controversial debate among shelters struggling with tight budgets and severe pet overpopulation problems in their cities. Most shelters put animals to sleep because they have no room for them. Humane societies' main goals are to prevent cruelty to animals. Most shelters also believe that death by lethal injection is better than allowing a stray to wander the streets.

These more traditional shelters argue that "no-kill" shelters that take in only the healthiest animals basically let someone else do the killing.

"It's making the rest of us look like cold-blooded killers," says Warren Cox of the Texas SPCA in Dallas. "And it's turned into a heck of a fund-raising hype. There is no such thing as a true no-kill organization. You may not kill them yourself but send them to the next shelter that will."

Humane societies say no-kill shelters take valuable charity dollars away from their causes. People are more likely to donate to shelters that claim they don't kill any animals.

Despite a national shift away from mass killings, the country is a long way from being able to provide loving homes for all stray animals.

About 4.5 million cats and



Dog's best friend: Pati Dane heads the Dalmatian Rescue in North Miami Beach, a "no-kill" private shelter. Forty-five Dalmatians she has rescued live in her home while waiting for adoption.

By Andrew Holf for USA TODAY

As predicted, Dalmatians are being dumped at pounds

By Haya El Nasser
USA TODAY

Just nine months after the megahit *101 Dalmatians* started a craze for everything dotted, animal lovers' worst fears are coming true: Hundreds of Dalmatians are being dumped in animal shelters around the country.

Animal rescue officials and others warned people not to rush out and get Dalmatian puppies just because they look adorable on the screen. But many people ignored that advice. "Backyard breeders," dog owners who are not professional breeders, expected a big demand for the dogs. So they bred too many dogs.

Now, breeders and owners who are discovering just how rambunctious Dalmatians can be are getting rid of them. In many shelters, dogs are killed if no one adopts them within a few days.

"We just can't take them fast enough," says Pati Dane, founder of Dalmatian Rescue Inc. in North Miami Beach. Dane quit her job in a veterinarian's office to take

care of 45 Dalmatians in her home. This year she has rescued 118 dogs — as many as she usually saves in two years.

There were plenty of warnings when the Walt Disney film came out. Animal-rights campaigns tried to tell people that Dalmatians are not for everyone. They are hotheaded and predisposed to deafness. They shed year-round and are born to run.

Both times the animated version of the Disney movie hit theaters, in 1961 and 1991, there has been a run on Dalmatian puppies. And both times shelters began reporting a jump in Dalmatians about six months after the film's release.

The live-action film released last Thanksgiving caused an increase in unwanted dogs around the USA.

► In Milwaukee, the Wisconsin Humane Society reports a 15% increase in Dalmatians since the movie came out. "Many of them are exhibiting physical and behavioral problems when they're surrendered to the shelter," says Victoria Wel-

lens, executive director.

► Katherine McGowan says the movie caused the number of Dalmatians brought in to The Humane Society of Missouri in St. Louis to jump 30%.

"They're bringing them in at six months (of age) when they've outgrown the cute puppy stage," she says.

► The Humane Society of the Tennessee Valley in Knoxville saw a 23% increase in Dalmatians the first six months of this year. "Movie theaters were bringing in litters of Dalmatians and sponsoring drives to win a puppy," says Vicky Crosetti, executive director.

In some cases, the dogs are being abandoned because the warning campaign worked too well. "We're getting couples who say they want to place their 3- or 4-year-old Dalmatian because they're having a baby and they read that Dalmatians are bad with children," says Sherree Gerzanic, head of Dalmatian Adoption and Referral Service in Waterford, Mich. "But Dalmatians can be wonderful family dogs."

dogs were euthanized in shelters last year, says Merritt Clifton, editor of *Animal People*. That's a 75% drop from the 17.8 million 10 years ago. The decline is due partly to aggressive spaying and neutering campaigns.

But many cities still have more pets than they can handle. In New York, 40,000 animals were put to sleep last year, down from more than

250,000 in 1962.

"It's tragic and we hate it," says Roger Caras, head of the American SPCA in New York. "But if the building is filled to capacity and cats and dogs are coming in through the door at the rate of 75 or 100 a day, what are you supposed to do?"

Caras says he essentially runs a "no-kill" shelter. "But we don't brag about it because it's unfair. Someone else does

the killing for us."

Even San Francisco's "no-kill" shelter kills. But Richard Avanzino, the pied piper of the "no-kill" movement and head of the San Francisco SPCA, says the animals that are put to sleep in his shelter suffer from incurable diseases or have behavior problems. He calls those killings "euthanasia." His SPCA put 62 animals to sleep in the 1996-97 fiscal year, down

from 96 the year before.

Humane societies have changed dramatically over the years. The key goal is to prevent suffering of animals. For most of this century, that meant getting cats and dogs off the streets and putting them to sleep if no one adopted them within three days.

Shelters even took on animal-control duties, rounding up strays and saving them from abusive homes or medical laboratories. But officials say because local governments didn't pay them enough they ended up using their own money to pick up animals.

Now that pet sterilization is catching on, humane societies want to spend more time saving, not killing, animals. Many are telling cities to handle animal control themselves and let taxpayers pay the bill. San Francisco did that in 1984; New York in 1995. Milwaukee will do so next year.

"The potential for an environment where every animal has a chance is becoming more of an option," says Victoria Wellens, executive director of the Wisconsin Humane Society.

San Francisco comes the closest to fulfilling a "no-kill" policy. Unlike other "no-kill" shelters that take in animals that are sure to be placed, San Francisco takes in the old, the ugly, the sick and the wild.

Avanzino's campaign to stop the killing has attracted a lot of donations. One in every three San Francisco households contributes to his shelter. The agency now has more than 2,000 volunteers and a \$10.6 million annual budget. That's triple the resources than some shelters that handle three times more strays.

The money helps pay for a new, \$15 million shelter and services including a grooming college, behavior academy and free medical care for pets of homeless people and seniors on fixed incomes.

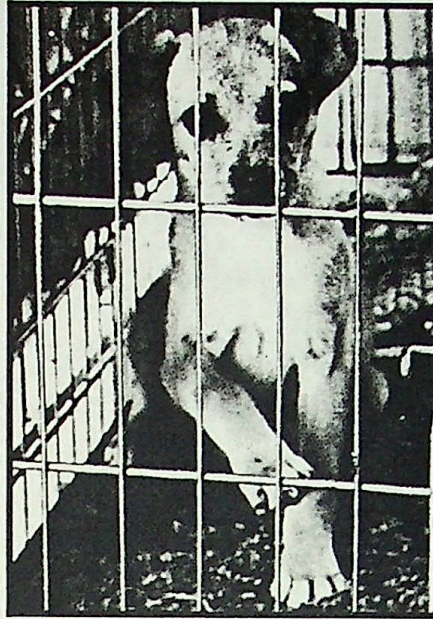
In 1994, San Francisco's SPCA signed an adoption pact with the city that guarantees a home for all adoptable cats and dogs. More than 4,600 stray animals ended up in homes last year.

Many shelters admit they're envious of Avanzino's success but say they could not get the financial and volunteer support in their cities. They argue that such a model of compassion could only work in San Francisco, a city with a long history of embracing humanitarian causes.

"There is no other city in the country that could do it," Caras says. "There's hardly enough money to feed the animals we have. You're lucky if you can feed them for 48 hours."

Avanzino says every city can do it. He even offers quarterly "Mission Possible" seminars to help other shelters learn his successful tactics.

"We have learned from this," admits Cox of the Texas SPCA. "This is the new frontier. ... We'll get there."



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Why Euthanize Animals?

Why can't animal shelters just keep animals that aren't adopted? Isn't that kinder than killing healthy animals?

We don't think so.

Dogs and cats need the care and companionship of people. Most shelters cannot afford to feed and care for millions of unwanted animals.

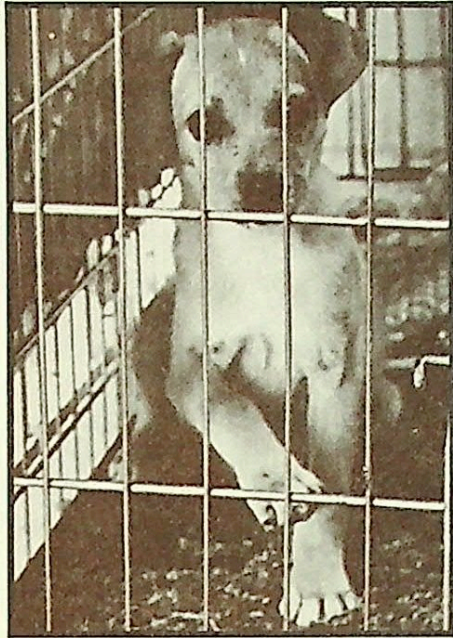
Even if shelters *could* keep them forever, these animals would still be alone—and lonely. It is stressful and cruel to keep animals in cages day after day, waiting and hoping for attention.

We are trying hard to reduce the pet overpopulation problem. That's why we encourage spay/neuter programs in our community.

But for the homeless, lonely animals in our care, a peaceful, humane death *is* the kindest end.



The Humane Society
of the United States
2100 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037



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