

Types of intake and outcomes

The ways in which pets enter and leave shelters in the U.S. differ by species and highlight opportunities for improvement.



- ▶ Stray dogs and cats make up the majority of intake (52.1%).
- ▶ Cat intake is more concentrated in strays (54.3% cats vs. 49.8% dogs), with less cat intake coming from transfers and owner-intended euthanasia.
- ▶ Adoptions are a larger driver of live outcomes for cats (56.7% cats vs. 45.1% dogs).
- ▶ Cats are more likely to be euthanized or die in a shelter's care.

Intake	Overall	Dogs	Cats
Stray at large	52.1%	49.8%	54.3%
Relinquished by owner	24.7%	24.0%	25.3%
Transferred in	13.3%	15.0%	12.0%
Other intakes	8.1%	8.9%	7.3%
Owner-intended euthanasia	1.7%	2.4%	1.1%

Live outcomes	Overall	Dogs	Cats
Adoption	50.7%	45.1%	56.7%
Returned to owner	12.1%	21.4%	3.0%
Transferred out	17.6%	19.7%	15.3%
Returned to field	3.1%	0.1%	6.3%
Other live outcome	1.5%	1.2%	1.8%

Other outcomes	Overall	Dogs	Cats
Died in care	1.7%	0.7%	2.7%
Lost in care	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
Shelter euthanasia	9.5%	7.1%	11.1%
Owner-intended euthanasia	1.6%	2.3%	1.0%

*Methodology: Among the 2,007 shelters that reported fully categorized 2021 data, all numbers are a share of gross intake. **Note:** The dog returned-to-field number is likely due to reporting errors. Dogs were not actually returned to the field.*

