

APPENDIX 0

Shelter Animal Data Collection

By Sara Kent, CEO, Shelter Animals Count

Thousands of organizations have committed to collecting and sharing data on the pets coming in and out of their shelters or rescue groups, including close to 1,000 agencies providing government animal services. Increasingly, shelters are realizing the value of consistently tracking data about the pets they serve and sharing those statistics in an open, transparent manner.

As the adage goes, you can't manage what you don't measure, and by participating in the Shelter Animals Count National Database, you can begin driving specific actions or initiatives, using data to save more lives and elicit the support you need by building compelling, data-based cases for assistance, if and when you need it.

By having clear, tangible data to share with your stakeholders (from the public to elected officials to funders and many more), you have the ability to tell the story of the true impact your programs and services have on the animals you care for, and the community at large. The transparency that sharing your data provides can foster greater trust and collaboration among animal welfare partners, as well as those working across all levels of public and private enterprise in your backyard and beyond.

The Shelter Animals Count National Database is intended to be a tool for you and your community at the local level to understand the trends, opportunities and challenges you face, and to help create a picture of how those evolve to the regional and national levels. By providing comprehensive, collaboratively-sourced data, we enable a greater understanding of the state of animal welfare and ways that we can all increase our positive impact for the animals we are privileged to serve.

About Shelter Animals Count

Shelter Animals Count is an independent, collaborative organization formed by a diverse group of stakeholders to create, share and steward the national database of sheltered animals that provides facts and enables insights to save lives.

A variety of efforts have been undertaken over the past few decades to create a platform for shelter data reporting (from the Asilomar Accords and live release rates to Naked Data) and much has been learned. There was a strong desire to come together and create a standardized database system to collect baseline information nationally.

Shelter Animals Count was created to give shelters the information they need to streamline their business operations, while at the same time making it possible to get a holistic overview of the national sheltered animal landscape. By collecting consistent shelter data, and by collaborating with other shelters that are doing the same, our ability to save animals' lives can be dramatically improved.

This lifesaving effort depends on all of us participating. Your data has the power to help not just the animals in your care, but animals everywhere. In addition to helping you better understand the ins and outs of your sheltering operations, the national database provides the opportunity to view data from similar organizations with similar community demographics and other variables that affect the work we do.

Joining Shelter Animals Count

By participating as a contributor of data, you will have access to an objective, unbiased database of your own and others' unfiltered shelter statistics, from the local level to the national level. From improving the quality of individual organizations' grant applications to helping communities best allocate their resources across multiple shelters or animal services providers, the benefits of being a data contributor — and therefore a data recipient — are tangible and powerful.

Because Shelter Animals Count consists of animal welfare professionals from diverse backgrounds and interests, united toward a common goal, you can be certain that your participation will be met with respect and support. Shelter Animals Count is committed to helping sheltering organizations save lives. In the future, we envision a world where grant-makers, researchers and all those with the ability to improve animal welfare will rely on this database as their source for consistent, reliable shelter data.

Most shelter software providers already offer custom reporting using the Basic Data Matrix, making sharing your data with Shelter Animals Count easy. To register your shelter, visit shelteranimalscount.org or send an email to info@shelteranimalscount.org.

Collecting data using the Basic Data Matrix

The Basic Data Matrix was designed to serve as a tool for basic data collection. It is a simple matrix containing what many (including the Asilomar Accords, the ASPCA, the National Federation of Humane Societies, American Humane, the University of California, Davis, Maddie's Fund, PetSmart Charities, the Humane Society of the United States and Shelter

Animals Count) have agreed are the minimum data points (along with definitions) that an organization should gather. Shelter Animals Count hopes that organizations will gather at least this data.

Whether organizations already gather a great deal of data or have only gathered the basics, this matrix should facilitate the merging of data at the local, regional or national level by providing a common framework. This matrix does not reflect any preference in data analysis or the calculation of rates; it is simply a tool for data collection and reporting.

Below are some details about collecting data for the Basic Data Matrix, and the matrix itself is shown at the end of this appendix.

The importance of reconciliation

Through shelter software, it is easy to download reports with animal data for Shelter Animals Count. To ensure that everyone is being accounted for, it is a best practice to regularly reconcile your data with a physical count of the animals in your shelter. First, print out a census, including the location of animals, from your software. Then, physically walk through your shelter and count the animals to confirm that the information in the software is correct and current. You will want to account for any off-site animals, such as those residing in foster care and at off-site adoption centers or who are hospitalized for veterinary care.

Tracking by species and age

The risks associated with being an adult dog, puppy, adult cat or kitten in a shelter environment vary a great deal. To help shelters assess and understand the differing risks for these populations of animals, the Basic Data Matrix includes a breakout by species and age for intake and outcome categories.

The age tracked within intake categories is the age at intake, and the age tracked within outcome categories is the age at outcome. It is not necessary to track age for beginning and ending counts. If tracking statistics broken out by species and age is beyond the capacity of an agency, simply tracking statistics by species is a place to begin.

Determining age

The Basic Data Matrix uses five months as the break point between puppy or kitten and adult. There are changes in an animal's teeth at or near five months of age that can help guide trained staff regarding proper categorization of the animal. For cats, at four to five months of age, permanent canines, premolars and molars are coming in (they're all in by six months of age). For dogs, at five to seven months of age, permanent canines, premolars and molars are coming in (they're all in by seven months of age).¹

Beginning and ending shelter counts

These numbers help frame the population of the animals sheltered and cared for by the organization. Do a shelter walk-through and physically count the animals sheltered within the organization. Don't forget to count those animals who have been admitted but who are not currently in the shelter (e.g. those in foster care, in the care of a veterinary hospital). Beginning and ending counts aren't broken down by age, since the age of animals will change while they are at the shelter.

Live admissions only

For the purposes of the Basic Data Matrix, track live admissions only (i.e., animals who are alive when they come into the agency's possession). The number of animals who are dead when taken into an agency's possession may be a data point to track, but that information is not tracked by this matrix.

Defining owner-intended euthanasia

Some shelters offer pet euthanasia to the public as a service whose cost may be subsidized and therefore more affordable than local veterinary clinics, thus ensuring access to this service. Defining when euthanasia should be recorded as "at the request of the owner," or not, is the subject of much discussion.

For the purposes of this document, "owner-intended euthanasia" is defined as the euthanasia of a pet whose owner brought the pet to the shelter for that service. In other words, the owner brought the pet in specifically for that service; it was the owner's intent before arriving. Any other definition of owner-requested euthanasia leaves much to interpretation, and therefore leads to a great deal of variation among organizations and their reporting. Shelter Animals Count believes the simplicity of this definition helps to ensure consistent application and record-keeping.

TNR vs. RTF

Trap-neuter-return (TNR) programs involve the management of community cats by trapping, sterilizing and returning cats to where they originated. Return-to-field (RTF) programs also manage community cats by sterilizing and returning them to their original locations, but in RTF, cats are admitted for sheltering (brought in by animal control personnel or by members of the public) and are therefore part of the animal sheltering function. In a TNR program, cats are not admitted for sheltering, only for services (sterilization and/or vaccination). Both programs are lifesaving, but the admission for sheltering, or not, is an important distinction.

Possession

“Adoption” and “Transferred to another agency” both make reference to possession. The primary concept here is one of ownership. For example, when an animal is in foster care, the agency still has possession or ownership. If the animal is adopted or transferred to another agency, possession is now with the new owner or with another agency.

Focus on cats and dogs

The Basic Data Matrix focuses on canines and felines. Many organizations also provide extraordinary services for other pets (e.g., pocket pets, rabbits, ferrets) and animals (wildlife), but data on that good work is not captured here.

NOTE

1. “How to Determine a Cat’s or Dog’s Age,” *Animal Sheltering*. Available at animalsheltering.org/magazine/articles/determine-age.

**SHELTER ANIMALS COUNT
BASIC DATA MATRIX**
Version 2.2018

Species		Canine		Feline		Total	
A	Beginning Animal Count (date: __/__/__)					0	Should include animals in shelter and animals admitted but currently in foster care or other offsite facility.
LIVE INTAKE							
		Adult	Up to 5 months	Adult	Up to 5 months	Total	
B	Stray/at large					0	Admitted through animal control/stated to be unowned or free-roaming.
C	Relinquished by owner					0	Admitted by owner, including adoption returns. All returns should be tracked as owner relinquishment.
D	Owner Intended euthanasia					0	Limited to this definition: Admission of pets whose owner brought the pet to the shelter with the INTENT of requesting euthanasia.
E	Transferred in from agency					0	An admission from another agency, for adoption, large scale seizure support, etc.
F	Other intakes					0	Impounds for cruelty cases & protective custody. Also, pets born while in care, and other types of admission not captured above.
G.1	TOTAL LIVE INTAKE	0	0	0	0		<i>Sum of B, C, D, E and F by Species & Age</i>
G.2	TOTAL LIVE INTAKE	0		0		0	<i>Sum of B, C, D, E and F by Species only</i>
OUTCOMES							
		Adult	Up to 5 months	Adult	Up to 5 months	Total	
H	Adoption					0	Final adoptions only, having permanently left the agency's possession. For example, it does NOT include animals placed in foster care or on overnight 'trial' stays.
I	Returned to owner					0	Stray or Owner Relinquished animals returned to their owner.
J	Transferred to another agency					0	Transferred out of the agency's possession to another entity.
K	Returned to field					0	Animals included in intake, altered and returned to stray capture location to be released (this is not TNR, see TNR/RTF in definitions).
L	Other live outcome					0	Barn cat programs, etc.
M.1	Subtotal: Live outcomes	0	0	0	0		<i>Sum of H, I, J, K and L by Species & Age</i>
M.2	Subtotal: Live outcomes	0		0		0	<i>Sum of H, I, J, K and L by Species</i>
N	Died in care					0	Animals who die, unassisted, while sheltered.
O	Lost in care					0	Animals whose outcome is unknown (may have escaped the shelter, outcome was not recorded and unknown).
P	Shelter euthanasia					0	All euthanasia other than that performed by the definition below as owner intended euthanasia.
Q	Owner Intended euthanasia					0	Limited to this definition: Euthanasia of pets whose owner brought the pet to the shelter with the INTENT of utilizing euthanasia services.
R.1	Subtotal: Other outcomes	0	0	0	0		<i>Sum of N, O, P and Q by Species & Age</i>
R.2	Subtotal: Other outcomes	0		0		0	<i>Sum of N, O, P and Q by Species only</i>
S.1	TOTAL OUTCOMES	0	0	0	0		<i>Sum of M.1 and R.1 by Species & Age</i>
S.2	TOTAL OUTCOMES	0		0		0	<i>Sum of M.2 and R.2 by Species only</i>
T	Ending Animal Count (date: __/__/__)					0	Should include animals in shelter and animals admitted but currently in foster care or offsite facility.

Note: To check your statistics and calculations - A plus G.2 should equal S.2 plus T

Total Column for Rows A + G.2 =	0
Total Column for Rows S.2 + T =	0