

## Chapter One

### Know Yourself—Status Check



#### **Erie County SPCA Finds Off-Site Adoptions Critical to Reaching Goals**

The Erie County SPCA in New York has set a goal to save every adoptable and treatable animal in their region by 2005. Part of their strategy to reach that goal involves tracking the source for their adoptions in order to plan for successful adoption program expansion.

Through careful record keeping, the SPCA knows—for example—that in 2002 more than 1,300 adoptions (nearly one in four of the agency's total adoptions) occurred at off-site locations. And a quarter of these (416) took place via their popular mobile adoption unit, the Whisker Wag'n. Further analysis has revealed that many of the off-site adopters had never visited any of the SPCA's permanent locations, which indicates that off-site adoptions are helping the SPCA to increase their market share—an essential component of reaching their overall goal. Finally, before expanding off-sites, the SPCA wanted to make sure that these increased adoptions were quality adoptions. Careful follow-up has revealed that off-site adoptions have satisfaction and retention rates equal to or better than on-site adoptions (a finding supported by research in other locations, see Neidhart & Boyd's "Companion Animal Adoption Study" in *JAAWS* 5(3), 2002). "Our numbers and our research make it clear," says Executive Director Barbara Carr, "We can save more lives and reach more people by taking the animals to them."







*Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing.*

—Albert Schweitzer

## Know Yourself—Status Check

<p>What is it?</p>	<p>A status check uses data to give you a more precise picture of your organization’s outcomes and the progress on your initiatives. Data includes statistics, rates and percentages which enable you to compare your organization’s current results to your past performance and future goals, and to the performance of other organizations.</p>
<p>Why do it?</p>	<p>Measuring status is like checking the vital signs of your organization. The more you understand about your strengths, improvement opportunities, and track record, the more strategically you can plan your next course of action.</p>
<p>When?</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>
<p>How?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collect data and calculate indicators.</li> <li>2. Compare to other organizations.</li> <li>3. Examine trends.</li> <li>4. Interpret results.</li> </ol>

**Key**

	Ahead of the Pack
	Caution
	For More Info
	Example
	Food for Thought
	Hint

## Step 1. Collect data and calculate indicators.

Begin by assembling information on your operations. Use the Daily and Monthly Records on pages 12 and 13, or download a basic statistics form at [www.petpopulation.org/basicstats.pdf](http://www.petpopulation.org/basicstats.pdf). You'll want to track your results for the following key items at a minimum:

- How many kittens, cats, puppies and dogs are admitted?
- How many of these are stray, surrendered, returned, protective custody or other?
- How many of these are adopted, transferred to another organization, returned to their guardians or euthanized?

If you are considering a specific program or initiative, think about what additional data might relate specifically to that effort and design your own form. For example, you might collect information on number of dog licenses, reasons for relinquishment, participants in training classes, etc.



### **With accurate statistics, you can...**

- plan new programs or buildings to effectively meet needs,
- provide feedback and inspiration for your staff and volunteers,
- demonstrate to funders how well their dollars are invested,
- assess your progress on your goals and plans, and
- evaluate the effectiveness of your programs, identifying those that are most successful.

### **Here are some measures to consider for data collection:**

#### **SPAY/NEUTER**

low-income spay/neuter  
 in-house spay/neuter  
 other spay/neuter  
 total spay/neuter  
 spay/neuter per capita

#### **ID**

cat IDs/dog IDs  
 total IDs issued

#### **HUMANE EDUCATION**

behavior helpline calls  
 dogs/guardians graduating from training class  
 repeat training class customers  
 customers referred by past graduates  
 kids graduating from classes or camps

#### **VOLUNTEERS**

adults/families providing foster care  
 active volunteers  
 volunteer hours  
 community service hours

#### **LIVE RELEASE**

return to guardians  
 return-to-guardian rate  
 adoptions net returns via off-site  
 adoptions net returns via foster  
 adoptions net returns via petfinder.com  
 adoptions net returns on site  
 total adoptions net returns  
 adoption rate  
 adoptions per capita  
 transfer to rescue  
 transfer to adoption organizations

#### **EUTHANASIA**

euthanasia for space  
 euthanasia for illness  
 euthanasia for behavior  
 euthanasia for temperament  
 total euthanasia  
 euthanasia rate  
 euthanasia per capita

#### **INVESTIGATIONS**

cruelty complaints  
 seizures  
 prosecutions

### The possibilities for data you can collect and track are virtually limitless.

Here’s a small sample of data collected by animal protection organizations around the country:

- Broward County Humane Society in Florida collected over \$1 million in at-the-counter donations in 2001 (this translates to an average donation of \$13.41 for every adoption center transaction). BCHS also processes 400 pounds of laundry every day.
- Erie County SPCA in New York answers the phone on average 400 times per day.
- Lincoln Animal Control in Nebraska received 485 bite reports in 2001, and increased licenses by 623 to 45,505.
- Marin Humane Society in California vaccinated 1,536 dogs and cats at clinics in 2001.
- Oregon Humane Society in Portland had 207,685 visitors to their website. OHS officers traveled 26,963 miles investigating 1,225 reports of cruelty in 2001.
- Saint Hubert’s Animal Welfare Center in New Jersey issued 3,873 canine diplomas in 2002.
- San Diego Humane Society in California had 710 minutes of TV and radio air time in 2001.
- The SPCA of Texas logged 41,787 volunteer hours in 2002 (and calculated the value of those hours at minimum wage to be \$381,489).
- Wisconsin Humane Society has a 1:10 staff-to-volunteer ratio with 80 staff and 800 volunteers.

### The number that you want to see may require an additional step with the data.

For example, you might measure off-site adoptions as a percent of the total or evaluate euthanasia on a per capita basis (by dividing euthanasia by your community population) as in the following example:



#### **San Francisco combined SFSPCA & SFACC Dog & Cat Statistics—Fiscal 2001/2002**

Raw Statistics

Human Population	750,000
Animals Admitted	7,836
Animals Adopted	4,975
Animals Redeemed	1,307
Animals Euthanized	2,163
Animals Neutered	7,500

Per-Thousand Population Statistics

Intake	10.4	admissions ÷ population × 1,000 (i.e. 7,836 ÷ 750,000 × 1,000)
Adoption/Redemption	8.4	adoptions + redemptions ÷ population × 1,000
Euthanasia	2.9	euthanasia ÷ population × 1,000
Spay/Neuter	10.0	surgeries ÷ population × 1,000
Budget*	\$10.00+	budget ÷ population


\*Budget = total SFACC budget (approximately \$6M), plus SFSPCA funds dedicated to adoption (approximately \$1M) and spay/neuter (approximately \$1M).

### Enhance planning and fundraising by linking your data to your budget.

What is your cost per animal handled? ... cost per adoption? ... cost per euthanasia? ... cost per spay/neuter? These numbers could help you secure government funding for prevention programs. For example, John Wenstrup and Alexis Dowidchuk published a study in 1999 in the *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* which indicated the average cost for handling per animal (of 186 shelters surveyed) was \$176. For an animal control facility routinely handling 10,000 animals annually, a spay/neuter or ID program that effectively reduces admissions by a modest 10% would save the government \$176,000 per year.

Using a more conservative \$105 per-animal-handled cost, New Hampshire demonstrated that the state spay/neuter program saved the state a net \$2,671,000 over seven years. (Source: Solutions to the Overpopulation of Pets, Inc., 2001)

**Note:** By using a monthly statistics record like the one on page 13, you will be able to convert your statistics to apply to a fiscal year (for budgeting purposes) as well as a calendar year (for state and regional tallies and comparisons).

 **You can understand even more about your operations** by breaking your statistics into service categories. The example (right) categorizes prevention services and intervention services. Customize your own chart using the model on page 14.

Measure		Five Years Ago	Three Years Ago	Last Year	Actual or Projected This Year
PREVENTION SERVICES	Low-income spay/neuters				
	In-house spay/neuters				
	Other spay/neuters				
	Total spay/neuters				
INTERVENTION SERVICES	Adoptions via off-site				
	Adoptions via foster				
	Adoptions via pefinder.com				
	Adoptions on-site				
	Total Adoptions				

 **Statistics & Facility Design**

If you are building or renovating, in addition to looking at how many animals you care for in a year, determine your average length of stay for felines and canines. In regions where admission numbers are declining and in limited-admission facilities, average lengths of stay are growing significantly. If, for example, average length of stay for cats is more than two weeks, your new facility may better serve those animals with condos or open cat rooms instead of traditional cages.

Length of stay will impact the space, medical, physical, and emotional needs for each animal, which will result in an increased demand for staff both in hours and level of expertise. Longer lengths of stay will also reduce the total number of animals who can be cared for in a given time frame. For more information, see "Guidelines for care in short-term, long-term, and sanctuary facilities," by Connie Howard and Staci Veitch in American Humane's *Protecting Animals*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pages 8 to 15; info@americanhumane.org.

## Step 2. Compare to other organizations.

To understand your current status and what is possible, identify some leaders in the field as well as some organizations serving communities comparable to yours.



### **A Comparative Sampling for Hillsborough County**

*By making euthanasia per-thousand-population comparisons, No More Homeless Pets of Hillsborough County, Florida (NMHP-HC) was able to quickly assess the magnitude of their county’s overpopulation problem. Because their adoption rate was already higher than both New Hampshire (NH) and San Francisco (SF), NMHP-HC staff realized that their euthanasia rate was not a result of low adoption numbers. With further research they learned that both NH and SF have substantial resources in place for high-volume, targeted spay/neuter, which has dramatically reduced admissions and, therefore, euthanasias.*

	<b>Euthanasia*</b>	<b>Adoptions**</b>
New Hampshire	2.2	8.1
San Francisco, CA	2.9	8.4
Orlando/Orange County, FL	12.6	
US Average	15.7	
Pasco County, FL	22.0	
Hillsborough County	33.0	9.7
San Antonio, TX	33.0	
Lake County, FL	35.0	

\* Source: *Animal People*, 2001 Estimates.

\*\* Source: Solutions to the Overpopulation of Pets, Inc.

What statistics and measures are others tracking? Compare your data and indicators to results for other organizations as in the example below. Use

the Benchmarking and “Comps” Assessment forms on pages 15 and 16. For more information on benchmarking, see Chapter 4.

**“COMPS” ASSESSMENT**

<b>Comparable Organizations</b>	<b>Measures They are Tracking</b>	<b>Their Results</b>		
<p><b>Animal Control</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Richland Hills Animal Services</li> <li>• Rural (between Dallas-Fort Worth) Texas</li> <li>• Human population 60,000</li> <li>• Animals handled per year: approximately 2,700</li> <li>• FTE* staff: 8</li> <li>• Operating Budget ('02): \$564,000</li> <li>• Hours: M 9-5; T-F 9-7; Sa 10-5</li> </ul>	<p>Dogs live release Dogs euthanized Cats live release Cats euthanized Calls for service Visitors Volunteer/comm svc hours Microchips implanted</p>	<p>2002  63% 500 25% 801 3140 18,131 2801 159</p>	<p>2001  56% 703 19% 1065 3519 15,844 2308 n/a</p>	<p>2000  67% 602 23% 1068 3638 13,945 2518 n/a</p>
<p><b>Private Shelter with Impound Contracts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humane Society of Central Delaware County</li> <li>• Rural/agricultural New York</li> <li>• Human population 40,000</li> <li>• Animals handled per year: approximately 1,100</li> <li>• FTE* staff: 6</li> <li>• Operating Budget ('02): \$249,000</li> <li>• Hours: T-Sa 11-4; S 1-3 (summers)</li> </ul>	<p>Dogs in Adopted/reclaimed Transferred for adoption Euthanized Cats in Adopted or reclaimed Transferred for adoption Euthanized Also track animals received by town.</p>	<p>2002  406 77% 44 14% 731 37% 80 60%</p>	<p>2001  449 76% n/a 24% 468 42% n/a 58%</p>	<p>2000  471 68% n/a 33% 551 28% n/a 65%</p>

\* FTE means full-time equivalent.



Need ideas about who’s doing what out there? Ask the NSO team: outreach@aspca.org.

### Step 3. Discover trends.

Assess your progress looking at your data over time. Monthly snapshots enable you to understand and anticipate the seasonal flow of the business.

Quarterly and yearly statistics help you compare your productivity to previous time frames.



#### **Measuring Long-Term Success**

Notice the changing trend in these New Hampshire (NH) statistics beginning in 1994 with the passage of legislation for state-funded high-volume, low-cost, targeted spay/neuter.

#### **Reducing Cat & Dog Euthanasia in New Hampshire Shelters 1980-2000**

YEAR	DOGS	CATS	TOTAL	% CHANGE FROM AVG.	PER 1000 PEOPLE
1980	7,886	9,492	17,378		17.3
1981	6,195	8,385	14,580		14.5
1982	5,412	6,243	11,655		11.6
1983	4,569	7,647	12,216		12.2
1984	4,362	7,364	11,726		11.7
1985	3,705	7,585	11,290		11.2
1986	4,019	6,564	10,583		9.5
1987	2,750	6,558	9,308		8.4
1988	2,369	8,065	10,434		9.5
1989	3,324	8,544	11,868		10.7
1990	3,342	9,108	12,450		10.9
1991	2,636	9,787	12,423		10.9
1992	2,177	9,332	11,509		10.4
1993	1,665	9,829	11,494		10.4
Average annual total from 1980-1993			11,309		11.4
1994	1,620	8,701	10,321	-9 %	9.4
1995	1,155	5,959	7,114	-37%	6.5
1996	1,242	5,555	6,797	-40%	6.0
1997	1,085	4,972	6,057	-46%	5.2
1998	1,041	3,775	4,816	-57%	4.2
1999	774	2,592	3,366	-70%	2.8
2000	634	1,941	2,575	-77%	2.2

Note: NH began state-funded neuter assistance in 1994. Funded by a \$2 surcharge on dog licenses, the program offers spay/neuter for all adopted animals at \$25, and spay/neuter plus necessary vaccinations at \$10 for all animals of persons on public assistance. More than two-thirds of the state's veterinarians participate. Veterinarians receive 80% of their normal fees from the program and performed 34,000 surgeries through fiscal 2002.

Source: NH Federation of Humane Organizations, Inc.; Solutions To the Overpopulation of Pets, Inc.

### Step 4. Interpret results.

The power of data is not in the numbers themselves, but in what you learn and how you use that knowledge. Consider your data and trends with colleagues, board members, staff, and volunteers. Ask yourselves why the numbers are what they are, and why they may be getting better or worse. Don't be surprised if the data initially

leave you with more questions than answers! You may need to explore underlying factors to get to the bottom of the issue. For example, if adoptions are down, are there fewer people coming to the shelter, a higher percentage being rejected, or fewer of the most easily adopted animals available? Use the chart on page 17 to analyze your trends.

Data	Trend	Possible Internal Reasons (changes in organizational resources or practices)	Possible External Reasons (changes in community needs, resources, behaviors, or environment)
Adoptions	Up 10%	More adoption staff Better customer service training Increased newspaper ads	Increase in human population
Kitten euthanasia	Down 22%	More foster families Better cleaning procedures	Feral population declines due to TNR



#### **Statistics as Inspiration**

At Maricopa County Animal Care & Control (MCAC&C) in Phoenix the staff posts a “Plus One” erase board for increasing adoptions and decreasing euthanasias. Tracking back to the same day of the week for the previous year, they remind themselves every day of how well they did last year, and challenge themselves to do at least one better each day this year. Julie Bank, Director of Public Programs and Development, says the board has been a great motivator for staff because it is something they see and use every day. MCAC&C’s three shelters have formed a bit of a friendly competition to see whose numbers will be greater! On most days, MCAC&C staffs meet their Plus One goal and then some—which means a combined total of at least 1,065 (365 days/year - 10 holidays x 3 facilities) more adoptions—or a minimum 5% improvement over their 2002 adoptions of 21,023.



For research and statistics on animal overpopulation visit the National Council for Pet Population Study & Policy at [www.petpopulation.org](http://www.petpopulation.org); for a collection of comprehensive and free program evaluation resources for download visit the innovation network at [www.innonet.org/resources/general\\_guides.cfm](http://www.innonet.org/resources/general_guides.cfm).



### MONTHLY RECORD

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

		THIS YEAR		LAST YEAR		PREVIOUS YEAR		PREVIOUS YEAR	
		MONTH	YTD	MONTH	YTD	MONTH	YTD	MONTH	YTD
<b>DOGS</b>									
<b>METHOD OF ENTRY</b>	Owner surrendered								
	Runng-at-large, stray								
	Transferred in								
	Owner-requested euthanasia								
	Other								
<b>METHOD OF DISPOSITION</b>	Returned to owner								
	Placed/adopted								
	Euthanized								
	Transferred out*								
	Other								
<b>CATS</b>									
<b>METHOD OF ENTRY</b>	Owner surrendered								
	Runng-at-large, stray								
	Transferred in								
	Owner-requested euthanasia								
	Other								
<b>METHOD OF DISPOSITION</b>	Returned to owner								
	Placed/adopted								
	Euthanized								
	Transferred out*								
	Other								
<b>OTHER</b>									
<b>METHOD OF ENTRY</b>	Owner surrendered								
	Runng-at-large, stray								
	Transferred in								
	Owner-requested euthanasia								
	Other								
<b>METHOD OF DISPOSITION</b>	Returned to owner								
	Placed/adopted								
	Euthanized								
	Transferred out*								
	Released to wild**								
Other									

\*to rescue, other shelters, or adoption centers

\*\* applicable to wildlife only

YTD = year to date

### DATA COLLECTION AND TRACKING RECORD

Measure		Five Years Ago	Three Years Ago	Last Year	Actual or Projected This Year
PREVENTION SERVICES					
INTERVENTION SERVICES					

### BENCHMARKING ASSESSMENT

<b><i>Leaders in the Field</i></b>	<b><i>Measures They are Tracking</i></b>	<b><i>Their Results</i></b>

### "COMPS" ASSESSMENT

<b>Comparable Organizations</b>	<b>Measures They are Tracking</b>	<b>Their Results</b>

### TRENDS ANALYSIS

Data	Trend	Possible Internal Reasons (changes in organizational resources or practices)	Possible External Reasons (changes in community needs, resources, behaviors, or environment)