What is Your Rate?

Understanding the Asilomar Live Release Rate, ASPCA Live Release Rate and Save Rate

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Metrics & Measurement Committee

Animal welfare organizations are talking about data and data collection. Whether it's a discussion about transparency (how many animals do you handle and what are their outcomes), confusion around different ways of measuring success around lives saved, or debating the pros or cons of what strategy for program measurement best meets the needs of the agency and community, clearly we are engaged in a national dialogue around the measurement of animal sheltering data.

This document was developed by the National Federation of Humane Societies to add to that dialogue, and to provide information and support to those animal welfare organizations struggling to understand what different rates used in our work mean. Basic information is provided here regarding the Asilomar Live Release Rate, the ASPCA's Live Release Rate and the Save Rate.

<u>Using this document</u>
The purpose of this document is to provide an introduction to each "rate" described. For this purpose these definitions are used:

> *Intake*:   The live animals admitted to a shelter
>
> *All Outcomes*:   The final disposition of animals admitted to a shelter (adoption, return to owner, transfer, euthanasia, shelter death, etc)
>
> *Euthanasia Outcome*:   Animals admitted to a shelter who are euthanized
>
> *Live Outcomes*:   Animals who leave a shelter alive through adoption, return to owner, transfer to another organization for adoption, or any other lifesaving program

Also, in order to demonstrate how these "rates" might measure the work of an animal sheltering organization, the following fictional statistics are used for the "Dreamy Valley Humane Society".
Dreamy Valley Humane Society – Annual Statistics for 2010
> Intake: 2000 animals
> Live Outcomes: 1000 animals
> Euthanasia Outcomes: 500 animals
> Owner Requested Euthanasias: 50 of the animals euthanized
> > Unhealthy/Untreatable: 25 of the 50 Owner Requested Euthanasias
> All Outcomes: 1500 animals (for this example, is Live Outcomes plus Euthanasia Outcomes)

ASILOMAR LIVE RELEASE RATE

The Formula: (Live Outcomes) divided by (All Outcomes minus Unhealthy/Untreatable Owner Requested Euthanasia)

What does Asilomar Live Release Rate tell us: What percentage of animals with an outcome left the facility with a Live Outcome (adoption, return to owner, etc)

What does Asilomar Live Release Rate NOT tell us: How Outcomes (All or Live) relate to Intake

The Asilomar Accords were developed to provide a uniform method for collecting and reporting shelter data. This method assigns each animal, upon admission, a conditions status of either "healthy", "treatable", or "unhealthy/untreatable". What conditions or behaviors actually fall into each category is defined by the individual organization or by a community coalition of animal sheltering organizations. The definitions are expected to reflect the community standards of what conditions are considered "healthy", "treatable", and "unhealthy/untreatable". The community standard is defined as what a reasonable pet owner in your community may consider as healthy, treatable or unhealthy/untreatable. Because the condition definitions are community based, comparison at a regional or national level is problematic as definitions will vary. For the purpose of calculating the Asilomar Live Release Rate, the definition of what is "unhealthy/untreatable" directly impacts the calculation. Owner Requested Euthanasia Outcomes for animals initially defined upon Admission as "unhealthy/untreatable" are not included in the calculation of an Asilomar Live Release Rate (see The Formula above).

The Asilomar Accords emphasize the importance of transparency for animal sheltering organizations. Also, using the development of community definitions for the condition of animals as they are admitted has encouraged the development of community coalitions focused on improving Live Release Rates at a community level. It is important to recognize that condition definitions only define a status at a specific point in time (generally at the time of admissions). The definitions do NOT define outcome. A healthy animal may be euthanized, an unhealthy/untreatable animal may be rehomed.

Overall, the Asilomar Live Release Rate does not provide insight regarding the Intake of an animal sheltering organization. Many animals may be admitted, and sheltered for a long period of time, and their status will not be reflected by this outcome focused measurement.

By the numbers:
The Dreamy Valley Humane Society's Save Rate would be calculated this way:
   1000 Live Outcomes divided by
        (1500 All Outcomes – 25 Unhealthy/Untreatable Owner Requested Euthanasias)
   1000/(1500-25) = .68

The **Asilomar Live Release Rate** is **68%**.

ASILOMAR "LITE" LIVE RELEASE RATE

The Formula: (Live Outcomes) Divided by (All Outcomes minus Owner Requested Euthanasia)

This formula is the same as the Asilomar Live Release Rate with one exception – it does adjusts All Outcomes by subtracting all Owner Requested Euthanasias, not only those Owner Requested Euthanasia's identified upon admission as "unhealthy/untreatable". This formula is an Asilomar-type option for those organizations or communities without the capacity to assign a conditions status for animals admitted (i.e. "healthy"," treatable"," unhealthy/untreatable"). Like the Asilomar Live Release Rate, this outcomes focused formula does not provide insight into the admissions of a sheltering organization. Many animals may be admitted, and sheltered for a long period of time, and their status will not be reflected by this outcome focused measurement.

The Asilomar Live Release Rate and Asilomar LITE Live Release Rate both provide insight into a shelter's outcome related activity. This may be a helpful measure for organizations whose admissions may fluctuate significantly because of animals who may not be available for adoption for some time, like animals taken into custody during animal cruelty investigations.

If a sheltering organization moves animals through their shelter efficiently to an Outcome, over time, their Asilomar Live Release Rate and ASPCA Live Release Rate will be very similar as All Outcomes will mirror Intake.

By the numbers:
The Dreamy Valley Humane Society's Save Rate would be calculated this way:
        1000 Live Outcomes divided by (1500 All Outcomes minus 50 All Owner Requested Euthanasias)
        1000/(1500-50)= .69

The **Asilomar LITE Live Release Rate** is **69%**.

ASPCA LIVE RELEASE RATE

The Formula: Live Outcomes divided by Intake

What does the ASPCA Live Release Rate tell us: Live Outcomes as a percentage of the animals admitted

What does the ASPCA Live Release Rate NOT tell us: How Live Outcomes compare to All Outcomes

The ASPCA Live Release Rate differs from the Asilomar Live Release Rate in that Live Outcomes are a percentage of Intake, not All Outcomes. By using Live Outcomes and Intake, the rate measures activity related to the impact of animals admitted and the number of Live Outcomes. The number of animals admitted to an agency will impact the resources available for live-saving programs (and thus Live Outcomes). This formula brings that impact directly into the calculation of a Live Release Rate. For example, when Live Outcomes are increased AND strategies are used to decrease Intake, the live release rate goes up. If the impact of animal Intake is not included (as in the Asilomar formula), a crucial component (Intake) of the organization's work is not reflected in the Rate and an opportunity to examine or even mitigate the impact of admissions may be missed.

By the numbers:
The Dreamy Valley Humane Society's Save Rate would be calculated this way:
      1000 Live Outcomes divided by 2000 Admissions
      1000/2000 = .5

The **ASPCA Live Release Rate** is **50%**.

SAVE RATE

The Formula: (Intake minus Euthanasia Outcomes) divided by Intake

What does "save rate" tells us: What percentage of the animals admitted were NOT euthanized.

What does "save rate" NOT tell us: What percentage of the animals admitted had or will have a Live Outcome.

Strength/Weakness
Because the data used by the Save Rate formula only utilizes Euthanasia Outcomes and Intake, the ability of the "Save Rate" to tell us about the work of the organization is limited. Using this formula – "Save Rate" could also be called the "Not Euthanized Rate". This formula is based on the assumption that an animal saved is an animal NOT euthanized. If your organization defines an animal saved as one with a Live Outcome (adoption, returned to owner, etc), then this "Save Rate" will not be helpful as this formula does not take Live Outcomes into account.

Using this formula, a shelter may have a high "Save Rate" and be admitting many animals, adopting out few, euthanizing few and sheltering many. Animals admitted to a shelter, and housed for years without a Live Outcome, are "saved" according to this formula.

By the numbers:
The Dreamy Valley Humane Society's Save Rate would be calculated this way:
>	(2000 admissions minus 500 euthanasia outcomes) divided by 2000 admissions
>	(2000 – 5000)/2000 = .75

The **Save Rate** is **75%**.

In Summary

The Rate	The Formula
Asilomar Live Release Rate	Live Outcomes divided by (All Outcomes minus unhealthy/untreatable)
Asilomar LITE Live Release Rate	Live Outcomes divided by All Outcomes
ASPCA Live Release Rate	Live Outcomes divided by Intake
Save Rate	(Intake – Euthanasia Outcomes) divided by Intake

Rates will Fluctuate

It is important to recognize that each formula uses measurements over a specific period of time, not a specific population of animals. An animal may be admitted during one time period measured and have an outcome during a different time measured.   Over short periods of time when working with a smaller data set, this can cause a "rate" to fluctuate significantly. For example, using the ASPCA's Live Release Rate, a large scale cruelty case occurring at the end of a month would significantly increase Intake and directly impact the ASPCA's Live Release Rate (as measured for that month), causing a decrease in rate. Alternatively, if those same cruelty case animals are made available for adoption all at once and get adopted quickly, the sudden increase in Live Outcomes during that period will cause the rate to increase. Over longer periods of time, and with larger data sets, the potential impact of these types of events is diminished.

Devilish Details

Of course, as with most complex challenges, the devil is in the details. There is a great deal of detail, debate and discussion around each of the reporting formats/rates described which is not included here. Again, this document should be considered an initial introduction to each rate only. The topics below simply highlight some of the current and challenging "details".

Community Definitions

The Asilomar Accords were developed not only to encourage shelters to be transparent and consistent in reporting their data, but also to encourage and foster the development of community coalitions. The development of community based definitions of healthy, treatable and unhealthy/untreatable as a component of a coalition may be both time consuming and challenging, but the specific exercise also provides an opportunity to build and strengthen potentially life-saving collaborations.

Feral Cats

Measuring the impact for and of feral cats in a community can be challenging. It begins with the simplest (and often quite challenging) question . . . what is a feral cat? Identifying which cats are feral (or unsocial), and what their status may be in a community has proven to be difficult.

Regardless of the "rate" used by a sheltering organization, recognize that within most communities feral cats are at risk and are a population which invites careful consideration and analysis to determine how that risk might be mitigated.

Owner Requested Euthanasia

This is an area of measure that is susceptible to significant fluctuations depending on the definition used. What if an owner arrives at the shelter with a pet whom they hope the shelter can rehome – but the pet has a condition which causes the shelter to be unable to provide rehoming services. Knowing that euthanasia is the only option for the pet at that shelter, the owner still decides to relinquish the pet for that service. Is it an owner requested euthanasia? Or is it an Intake and Euthanasia Outcome? This is an important area for organizations to consider specifically in terms of measurement, transparency and impact.

Identifying what Population is at Risk

Numbers and statistics can help drive innovation and uncover opportunity. No matter which formula is used by an organization to measure their "rate", it is crucial to not overlook the opportunity to look at data in detail and identify specific populations of animals sheltered who may be a risk. By doing so, organizations may find opportunities to significantly increase the lives saved in their community by targeting life saving measures for those animals most at risk.

Died in Care (pull out of Lost/Unknown Disposition category in Asilomar)

And finally, it is important to track animals who died or were lost in care while sheltered. The Asilomar Accords currently report animals in this category as a combined figure, however there is value in segregating this information. Carefully monitoring those animals who died in care and the factors which caused their death is an enlightening measure of shelter activity and though not tracked specifically in all of the strategies described, should be a data point considered by shelter leaders.

More to Measure than Rates

While calculating one of these rates may be useful in developing goals, there are many other data indicators which will better help an organization understand or evaluate their shelter operations and improvement toward decreasing risk for shelter animals. Some examples of indicators to watch are:

- Admissions
- Adoptions
- RTO
- Euthanasia
- Length of Stay

As discussed previously in this document, the careful examination of such data can help an organization identify specific populations of animals who are most at risk within the shelter and aid in the timely development of strategies to mitigate the identified risk.

Data from the communities an organization serves is yet another potential source of important information when evaluating shelter programs and impact. For example, a careful review of where

animals are admitted from and for what reason can lead to the development of specific strategies or programs to address community issues (targeted spay/neuter for certain zip codes/species, on the street education/engagement of pet owners, etc).

As a community of animal welfare organizations, we must continue to embrace the need to not only do good work, but measure and evaluate the work we are doing. There is much to measure and learn from beyond your agency's "rate" for lives saved.

In Conclusion

We encourage shelter leaders to explore all options regarding how to measure and publicly report on the work of their organizations. In some cases, there is much to be learned by examining statistics using a variety of methods. For more information regarding data gathering and analysis, please visit the websites of these National Federation members or partners.

Asilomar Live Release Rate	www.asilomaraccords.org
ASPCA Live Release Rate	www.aspcapro.org
Denver Metro Animal Coalition	www.mdsalliance.org
Maddie's Fund	www.maddiesfund.org
The Humane Society of the United States	www.animalsheltering.org
UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program	www.sheltermedicine.org