Dogs on the Move: Factors Impacting Animal Shelter and Rescue Organizations’ Decisions to Accept Dogs from Distant Locations

Christy L. Hoffman
hoffmanc@canisius.edu
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3.3 million dogs in shelters *

20.3% euthanized*

How to reduce the number euthanized?

*ASPCA (2017)
One idea: Move dogs around!

*AVMA Pet Ownership and Demographics Sourcebook (2012)
Regional differences in preferences?
Long-distance dog transfer
Our questions

• What are the logistics?
• How are dogs selected?
• What are the medical requirements?
• How are partnerships formed and maintained?
Participants

• E-mail sent to 3000 organizations
• Shelter or animal rescue employees or volunteers involved in long-distance transfer
• One response per organization

193 completed surveys
More about participants

- 96% female
- 69% volunteer-run
- Rescue: 72%
  Shelters: 21%
  Other: 7%
- 26.9%
- Building-based: 31%
  Foster-based: 65%
- 64% took in >100 dogs annually
- 69% volunteer-run
Logistics

**Funding**
Destination organization: 43%
Source organization: 19%
Shared: 8%
Volunteers and donors: 9%
It depends: 22%

**Transportation**
Car, van, or truck: 96%
Planes: 34%
Staff/volunteers from destination organization: 56%
Staff/volunteers from source organization: 41%
Independent transport groups: 53%
Expectations

Descriptions: 90%
(breed, age, size, color, sex)

Photographs: 78%

Attention-grabbing cases: 13%
Factors impacting decisions

- Likelihood of euthanasia at source organization: 85%
- Bite history: 95%
- Potential of disease transmission: 91%
- Breed: 54%
Likelihood of transferring in dogs by circumstance
Medical requirements

Mandatory quarantine period: 64%

Of the 64%...
72% carried out at destination organization
89% between 2-14 days

Mandatory medical treatments pre-transfer: 76%

No pre-transfer medical requirements strongly linked to not having a mandatory quarantine period!!!

Northeast most likely to require both
## Pre-transfer medical requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Total (out of 193)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rabies Vaccine</td>
<td>111 (57.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distemper/Parvovirus Vaccine</td>
<td>104 (53.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heartworm Test, Treatment, a/or Preventative</td>
<td>68 (35.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bordetella Vaccine</td>
<td>51 (26.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fecal Testing/ Deworming</td>
<td>46 (23.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spay/Neuter</td>
<td>43 (22.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing a/or Treatment for External Parasites</td>
<td>28 (14.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing a/or Treatment for Tick-Borne Illnesses</td>
<td>11 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microchip</td>
<td>9 (4.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partnerships

1-5 organizations: 60%

>6 organizations: 20%

New organization each time: 11%
Reasons partnerships failed

53% reported failed partnerships

Lack of thorough medical information: 22%

Lack of thorough behavioral information: 27%

Deliberate deception: 21%

Lack of desirable dogs: 5%
Successful partnerships

- Honesty
- Trust
- Shared Goals
Conclusions

• Volunteers play key roles
• Disease transmission a valid concern
• Honesty and trust crucial for relationship maintenance
• Awareness of and adherence to best practice guidelines necessary
Future Directions

• How do transfer programs impact LOS, LRR, etc., in source and destination shelters?

• Maximizing dog welfare during transport

• Community-based transfer programs

• Helping individuals relocate with pets
Thank you!