A survey of sheltering organizations’ perceptions of transportation programs and adopter satisfaction

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Dog Transport is a hot topic
Only one published study specifically exploring dog transport programs
- surveyed 193 individuals from organizations who received dogs from greater than 100 miles away
- examined logistics, factors in dog selection, medical requirements, organizational partnerships and perceptions of transport programs

Found a variety of considerations for successful programs
Did not examine the perspective of sending organizations
• **Purpose:**

- Study aims to explore the experiences of both sending and receiving organizations, as well as perceptions about the success of these dogs in their adoptive homes.
Methods

• **Design:**
  - similar to Simmons and Hoffman, we surveyed representatives from sheltering organizations
  - target was 200 participants (only one per org)
  - respondents could be sending or receiving orgs
  - if organization was both, then randomly assigned to receive questions from only part of the survey
Questionnaire Development:
- input from key stakeholders and an animal transport working group
- tested among 10 representative organizations

Final Questionnaire
- 4 sections
- took an average of 25 minutes to complete

Recruitment: convenience, snow ball sampling, posted online through CSD and other industry web resources and social media
- Launched September 2017, data collection ongoing
Methods

• Data Analysis:
  Statistical comparisons not yet completed as recruitment ongoing

• Preliminary Results:
  Descriptive statistics
  Reviewed responses for themes
Preliminary Results

• Organization Demographics
  - 139 respondents (so far)
  - 33 states
  - 70.5% “private”
  - 51% volunteer only
  - 56.5% had a physical building
  - 88.3% 501 3C

• Just under 50% were “rescues,” including 19 who had a building

• Municipal underrepresented, but lots of open admission
Variety of intake philosophies:
- most open admission or managed admissions
- over 70% would take dogs of any breed
- 1/3 would not take a dog for behavioral reasons

75% had a policy requiring adopted dogs to be returned
Preliminary Results

• Dog transportation (among 139 responding organizations)
  - 73 sending organizations, of which 30 transport dogs greater than 100 miles
  - 92 receiving organizations, of which 64 receive dogs greater than 100 miles
### Preliminary Results

**Sending Organizations (N=73)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What don't your receiving partners want in a dog?</th>
<th>Which requirements are hard for groups to meet?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>That the dog be heartworm negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bully Breeds</td>
<td>That the dog be cute and fluffy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large or older dogs</td>
<td>That older dogs have lab work performed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poorly socialized dogs</td>
<td>That the dog be “perfect”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"Perfectly adoptable dogs die here in Texas all the time. Once the dogs are up north, many good homes adopt our dogs and we even get calls from the new owners and how happy they are with their new family member. And some keep in contact for years. The benefits are great for these dogs and it's worth every penny."
Qualitative Results

“We don't get to see the end result, when the dog is adopted. Most of the time we don't receive pictures of the adopter with the pet we sent. Also, the cost of sending them. Most receiving rescues/shelters don't help with the cost of vetting the dogs, even though they receive an adoption fee for them. We usually have to put out all the vetting expense, spay/neuter, vacc, worm, Heartworm testing, medications, only to have to send them on transport and also pay the transport on top of everything. We only send dogs that we have had for an extended time with no interest from adopters.”
Preliminary Results

• Sending Organizations:
  
  - many comments about the cost of transport programs
  
  - many comments about being able to place highly adoptables and needing more help with difficult to place dogs
Preliminary Results

- Receiving Organizations

- Just over ½ of receiving organizations have terminated a relationship with a sending partner

- 53% of organizations in Simmons and Hoffman had terminated a partnership
## Preliminary Results

### Receiving Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What doesn't your organization want in a dog?</th>
<th>What requirements or preferences of your organization are particularly challenging for your sending partners to meet, if any, and why?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>Accurate behavioral assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heartworm</td>
<td>Heartworm negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dog with a bite history</td>
<td>Medical protocol- vaccines/testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit bull type</td>
<td>Complete Paperwork</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• **Benefits to receiving shelters:**

“They help us to have adoptable pets for adoption. They help to get local pets adopted because people see a lot of dogs on our website which gets them into the shelter. Once in the shelter, they may choose a dog that was not from transport”
Qualitative Results

• "We can't fix behaviorally broken dogs. It's not all rainbows and unicorns here just because we don't have dog overpopulation, we have different challenges now."
Example of a disconnect:

- 39% of receiving organizations say that their organization pays the total cost of transport (Simmons and Hoffman found 43%)

But...

- only 10% of Sending organizations said that the receiving organization paid the entire cost AND
- 52% of Sending organizations said their organization paid the entire cost of transport
Cost of Transport

• For Sending organizations:

- it is expensive on our end
- there is little or no cost sharing between organizations
- a lot of receiving agencies have too many requirements for our small country facility to fulfill
- we lack the volunteers and funds to send animals out
• Summary of themes:
  • Overall cost of the programs and who should pay for what is a significant concern
  • Similarly, what do about dogs with behavioral problems and what kind of behavioral assessment is required
  • Challenging breeds or breed types
"Transporting dogs saves lives, the key to success is a strong relationship between partners and clear expectations. If the receiving shelter is doing a good job these dogs should not impact the community or resources in the community. “
Limitations

- Preliminary analysis—these results may change
- Individual perceptions, not using intake data
- Convenience sample
- Response bias
Next steps

• Compare opinions by org type and location
• Further comparison of sending and receiving orgs
• Examine relationships between sending and receiving organizations
Discussion

• Opportunities exist for better understanding between sending and receiving organizations and the constraints each are under.

• There is little understanding of how dogs transported greater than 100 miles actually do in the adoptive home.

• Future research should consider the perspectives of adopters or try to substantiate these trends using shelter data.
Conclusion

• Did you take the survey?
• Add your organization’s perspective to our results!
• Take the survey here:

  link:

  https://tufts.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_da7laWwEGv32hLL

• Only one person per organization please!