Don’t Hold Cats—Save Them!

CJ Bentley
Director of Operations
Shirene Cece DVM
Director of Shelter Medicine
Michigan Humane Society

Length of Stay (LOS)

Length of stay in the shelter is the time between admission and outcome

Dr. Cece on rounds

Why is this animal still here???

Dr. Cece on rounds
Factors influencing length of stay

- Holding times enforced by local ordinances
- Illness/weight gain
- Intake quarantine
- Spay/neuter
- Awaiting needed care

LOS and URI

- Multiple studies have shown that LOS is the most significant risk factor for URI in shelter cats
- URI increases LOS which in turn results in crowding and more disease
- Requires resources in a limited resource (money, staff, time) environment
- Results in decreased welfare for the animal due to illness and stress
- Reduced adoptions
- May result in euthanasia of ill animals

Hold Times

- 4 days but could be longer due to Sundays, holidays
  - Following a regulation from 1969 that required dealers or shelters that were operated by a township, city, village, or county to hold dogs and cats for four days before disposition and 7 days with identification.
  - Our organization is none of the above
  - Unidentified cats are rarely claimed (add the stats for this)
  - Litters of kittens were being held for 4 days and possibly more for holidays, Sundays, any day we were closed
  - This didn’t help reduce our LOS so...
Change What?

- Step #1
  - “Re-defined” kitty ownership
  - Provide food and/or housing for 10+ days
  - Congratulations! You own a cat!
  - Slight reduction
  - LOS
  - But not in overall euth rates
  - And not in adoptions

Change What?

- Step #2
  - “Define” our legal hold obligations
  - WHAT’S RIGHT FOR THE CATS?
  - Research via high-volume Detroit facility
    - 2,766 stray cats in 2012
    - # of ppl who look for lost cats
      - w/in 4 - 7 days - 12
      - w/in 8 - 14 days - 36
      - 6 months later - 1!
    - 29 RTOs that year...

Then What Happened...

- LOS dropped 2 whole days on average
- One location dropped 5 days (avg)
- Adoptions increased 24%
- Euthanasia dropped 27%
- Euthanasia for severe URI dropped 35%
- Euth continues to drop – now at 56%
- RTOs saw almost no change
THANK MEW!

Questions?

CJ Bentley: cjbentley@michiganhumane.org
Dr. Shirene Cece: scece@michiganhumane.org