Shelter Admission Decisions During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Providing Services Safely

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Balancing safety and essential functions

Stay home to save lives

What Does a Stay-at-Home Order Mean? 11 Questions Answered

Stay-at-home orders restrict people from leaving their homes for anything other than essential activities. The [...] to limit people's contact with each other in order to slow the spread of the disease. Getty Images

1. What does a stay-at-home order mean?

According to Brian Labus, PhD, MPH, an assistant professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, a stay-at-home order means you should remain at home and away from other people unless it's absolutely necessary to go out.

"We want people to stay at home as much as possible, but make exceptions to go out for medical care, food, and essential work," explained Labus.

Although some have been calling it a shelter-in-place order, this isn't actually the case, Labus said.

A shelter-in-place order would mean that you couldn't go out for any reason due to an immediate threat to your life and safety.

"If you do not follow a shelter-in-place order, you put your life at risk.

"If you do not follow a stay-at-home order, you put the community at risk in addition to yourself," he said.

Now more than ever

Here's when experts predict new coronavirus cases will peak in California, Sacramento region

BY TONY BIZJAK AND ALEXANDRA YOON-HENDRICKS

APRIL 06, 2020 05:00 AM, UPDATED APRIL 06, 2020 01:47 PM

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ALLISON GONTHIER, R.N.
Infection Control & Quality Manager   Sutter Ros

It's the moment we are all waiting for. And worrying about. When will the growing wave of coronavirus infections peak in the Sacramento region and California?

Experts say the next few weeks are critical: The magnitude of the virus' sweep is about to come into focus.

"This is the moment to not be going to the grocery store, not going to the pharmacy, but doing everything you can to keep your family and your friends safe," Dr. Deborah Birx, who is coordinating the White House's response to the pandemic, said Saturday.

"The next two weeks are extraordinarily important."

Essential function

March 22, 2020

On March 19, 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-33-20 directing all residents immediately to heed current State public health directives to stay home, except as needed to maintain continuity of operations of essential critical infrastructure sectors and additional sectors as the State Public Health Officer may designate as critical to protect health and well-being of aall Californians.

In accordance with this order, the State Public Health Officer has designated the following list of "Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers" to help state, local, tribal, and industry partners as they work to protect communities, while ensuring continuity of functions critical to public health and safety, as well as economic and national security.

HEALTHCARE / PUBLIC HEALTH

Sector Profile

The Healthcare and Public Health (HPH) Sector is large, diverse, and ope... private sectors. It includes publicly accessible healthcare facilities, resea... manufacturers, and other physical assets and vast, complex public-priva... systems required for care delivery and to support the rapid, secure tran... amounts of HPH data.

Essential Workforce

- Workers providing COVID-19 testing; Workers that perform critical ... COVID-19 response.
- Health care providers and caregivers (e.g., physicians, dentists, psyc... practitioners, nurses and assistants, infection control and quality as... physical and occupational therapists and assistants, social workers, ... diagnostic and therapeutic technicians and technologists).
- Hospital and laboratory personnel (including accounting, administra...

Page 11 - OTHER COMMUNITY-BASED GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Essential Workforce
Workers at animal care facilities that provide food, shelter, veterinary and/or routine care and other necessities of life for animals.

See Page 3 - EMERGENCY SERVICES SECTOR

Essential Workforce - Law Enforcement, Public Safety and First Responders

Animal control officers and humane officers

A difficult balance

Grocery Stores Are the Coronavirus Tipping Point

Even one of the last bastions of normal American life could not escape the outbreak.

OLGA KHAZAN MARCH 24, 2020

MORE STORIES

What You Need to Know About the Coronavirus

HALEY WEISS

Don't Halt Social Distancing. Instead, Do Right.

AARON E. CARROLL AND ASHISH JHA

Why the Coronavirus Been So Successful

ED YONG

SARAH BLESENER / THE NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX

Essential ≠ business as usual

Limit your trips and go when stores are less crowded
Experts advise limiting grocery trips to once every two weeks, if possible. This may mean stocking up on dry goods, and frozen or canned fruits and vegetables.

Clean your hands and disinfect your cart
"As soon as you get there, use hand sanitizer, and touch only what you need to touch. Wipe down your cart handle, and then use the hand sanitizer again," said Elizabeth Eckstrom, professor and chief of geriatrics at Oregon Health and Science University.

Do not go to the store, or any public spaces, if you have been exposed to the coronavirus or are experiencing symptoms
People are thought to be most contagious when they are exhibiting symptoms. But the virus can also spread from people who don't yet have symptoms or who have the virus but never get sick.

If you are 60 or older or have a compromised immune system, have your groceries delivered
Early statistics show that the older you are, the more likely you are to get critically ill or die if you contract the coronavirus, Eckstrom said. The CDC finds that the death rate for people 65 to 84 years old is 3% to 11%, and the death rate for people 85 and older is 10% to 27%.

Essential ≠ business as usual

National Animal Care & Control Association
40960 California Oaks Rd. #242
Murrieta, CA 92562
(913) 768-1319
naca@nacanet.org
www.nacanet.org

Non-essential services, while they may be critically important under normal operating conditions, are not necessary in this immediate moment, as shelters across the country reduce services to protect workers and the public, conserve precious medical supplies, and minimize the spread of COVID-19. These non-essential services include:

- Training, events, gatherings

- In-person pet licensing (online or phone options should be considered)

- Spay and neuter services for community and shelter pets

- Community outreach

- Community medical or microchip clinics

- Trapping of companion or wildlife animals that are not public safety concerns

- TNR/SNR

- Intake of healthy cats and kittens

- Pick up and/or intake of healthy, friendly stray animals who are not in immediate danger

https://www.nacanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/4.Essential-Animal-Services-During-COVID-19.pdf

What is essential?

- Is this procedure necessary to save the animal's life?
- Is this procedure, exam, test etc. necessary to alleviate pain or suffering?
- Can this case be managed in a way that mitigates the human health risks of COVID-19 transmission between the veterinary staff, owner, and their respective families and communities?
- Would this procedure require the use of scarce personal protective equipment resources needed for critical human medical care?
- Or can this patient safely wait until resources are less scarce and human health risks are lower?

Non-essential services to discontinue *for now*

- Training, events, gatherings
- In-person pet licensing (online or phone options should be considered)
- Spay and neuter services for community and shelter pets
- Community outreach
- Community medical or microchip clinics
- Trapping of companion or wildlife animals that are not public safety concerns
- TNR/SNR
- Intake of healthy cats and kittens
- Pick up and/or intake of healthy, friendly stray animals who are not in immediate danger

Understanding intake recommendations and defining capacity

Let's talk infectious dose

The New York Times

Opinion

These Coronavirus Exposures Might B[e] the Most Dangerous

As with any other poison, viruses are usually deadlier in larger amounts.

Both small and large amounts of virus can replicate within our cells and cause severe disease in vulnerable individuals such as the immunocompromised. In healthy people, however, immune systems respond as soon as they sense a virus growing inside. Recovery depends on which wins the race: viral spread or immune activation.

Thanks for reading The Times.
Subscribe to the Times

Virus experts know that viral dose affects illness severity. In the lab, mice receiving a low dose of virus clear it and recover, while the same virus at a higher dose kills them. Dose sensitivity has been observed for every common acute viral infection that has been studied in lab animals, including coronaviruses.
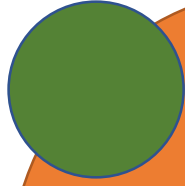
https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/01/opinion/coronavirus-viral-dose.html

Every interaction carries risk

Bringing an animal to the shelter

Admitting the animal

Caring for the animal on a daily basis

Releasing the animal
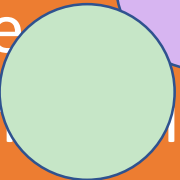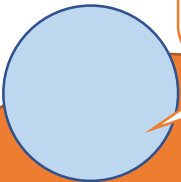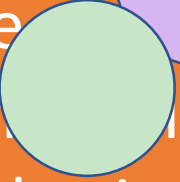
Every interaction carries risk

Bringing an animal to the shelter

Admitting the animal

Caring the ... on ... ally basis

Feed, water, kennel cleaning, laundry, basics of humane care = how many common surfaces contacted?

Releasing the animal

Every interaction carries risk

Bringing an animal to the shelter

Admitting the animal

Caring the on___ly basis

Releasing the animal

Feed, water, kennel cleaning laundry, basics of humane care = how many common surfaces contacted?

Every interaction carries risk

Bringing an animal to the shelter

Admitting the animal

Caring for the animal on a daily basis

Releasing the animal

Reducing available shelter capacity for future emergency response

But what about this?

Shelter: A shelter must be maintained for stray animals. California Food and Agricultural Code section 31105 (County provision for Impounding and Killing) requires counties to pick up, shelter, and provide care for stray animals for mandated time periods. The Animal Services section is responsible for the impoundment, care, and final disposition of all stray animals. The shelter is a place where owners can look for lost ~~animals~~ ... many other code sections that mandate proper ~~care~~ ... 121690(e), requires that each city, city and coun~~ty~~ ... (animal care and control) and a rabies control pr~~ogram~~ ...

Rabies Control: Rabies control is mandated by sections of the California Code of Regulations (CCR) such as Title17 CCR 2606 *et. seq.* (Animal Rabies) and the Health and Safety Code (H&S) 121580 (Quarantine Defined), as well as H&S 121585 (Rabies Area Defined).

The Health Officer has the authority to order quarantine pursuant to H&S 120210 (Functions and Duties of Local Health Officers). The Animal Services section acts as the agent of the Health Officer.

Rabies control includes several parts:

- Stray Dog Control (Food and Agricultural [F&A] Code Section 31101, Seizure and Impounding) – Free roaming dogs are most likely to be exposed to rabies and to in turn expose humans.

- Dog Licensing (F&A Division 14 Sections 30501 and 30801, Application of County Licensing Ordinances) – Licensing is a registration service to document that a dog is currently vaccinated against rabies as required by State law.

- Investigation and Quarantine of Biting Animals (Title 17 CCR 2606 (b) (2), Public Health, Rabies) – This service is performed to verify that the animal was not contagious with rabies at the time of the bite.

- Investigation and Quarantine of Domestic Animals (H&S 121615, Duty of Peace Officers and Health Boards) – Animals that have been in contact with a possibly rabid animal are quarantined to be certain that the exposed animal does not acquire and spread the disease.

- Rabies Vaccination (H&S 121690 (f) Rabies Areas Licensing, Vaccination Regulations) – Clinics are held to allow animal owners to obtain low cost rabies vaccinations in public places. State law requires the Division to host clinics and provide vaccinations at a reasonable cost.

- Reporting to the State (Title 17 CCR 2606.4 (a) (4) Officially Declared Rabies Areas) – Statistical information must be provided to the State on all of the activities.

Ongoing/maintenance vs urgent

12th Annual Free Rabies
Vaccination Clinic
Sept. 29th 12:00-3:00pm
Five Locations!

# Defining essential: Benefit and risk reduction

Benefit:
- Acutely protect human life and safety
  - E.g. dangerous dogs
  - E.g. *not* routine activities to reduce free roaming dogs
- Acutely protect animal life and safety
  - E.g. injured, sick, no available caretaker
  - E.g. *not* healthy, stray animals at no exigent risk
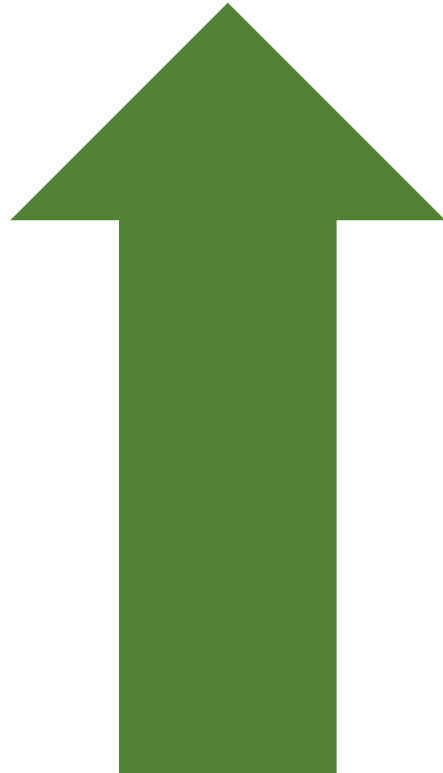
Risk reduction:
- Limit public travel/entry to shelter
  - Phone evaluation first
  - Field officer pickup may be preferable
- Intake and outcome can be accomplished while maintaining social distance
  - Appointment based
  - Curbside delivery or field officer pick up/drop off
- Care can be provided within double compartment housing capacity
- Outcomes are available to balance intakes
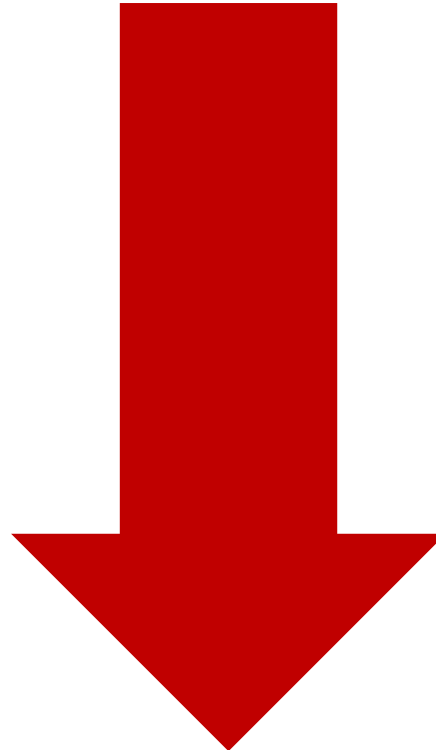
Compounding factor

The effects of fatigue on performance in simulated nursing work

Linsey M. Barker ✉ & Maury A. Nussbaum

📄 Full Article   🖼 Figures & data   📄 References   ❝ Citations   📊 Metrics   🖶 Reprints & Permissions   📄 PDF

Abstract

Fatigue is associated with increased rates of medical errors and healthcare worker injuries, yet existing research in this sector has not considered multiple dimensions of fatigue simultaneously. This study evaluated hypothesised causal relationships between mental and physical fatigue and performance. High and low lev...

tasks in a la...

subjective a...

Completing...

experimen...

Related articles

Dimensions of Fat...
Performance: A St...
Approach Among
Linsey M. Barker S...

Performance on tasks requiring high levels of vigilance, tasks of long duration or tasks requiring newly learned procedural skills appear more vulnerable to the effects of fatigue (Owens 2001). Within this study, performance on the tasks requiring endurance and holistic motor control (box placement and force fluctuation), as well as those requiring more complex cognitive processing (code substitutions and logical relations), were also more sensitive to changes in fatigue levels.

Capacity right now

- Aim for < 25% of housing occupied
- Allow ability to function with 50% staff and limited to no volunteers
- Retain capacity for surge in COVID related housing
  - Housing for 14 days separate from general population
  - Double compartment housing for each animal

Kern County Animal S[...]
March 27 at 11:48 AM · 🌐

We wanted to take a moment to [...]
adversity as we all are facing, it [...]
us that we are all part of a comm[...]
help us find temporary foster ho[...]
we've received has been nothing [...]
County Animal Shelters, we hav[...]
Over 125 shelter animals are curr[...]
community. These are pets that wo[...]
throughout this pandemic response[...]
these pets, but it has allowed ou[...]
remain at home to care for their lov[...]
care to their own pets, and yes, the[...]
photos of the kennels that could ha[...]
Instead, they're with you, and these[...]
County. Be proud. #KernCountyStr[...]

"Between all 3 Kern County Animal Shelters, we have a total of 41 animals our team is caring for. Over 125 shelter animals are currently being cared for by you, this community. Not only has your generosity saved these pets, but it has allowed our staff and volunteers, over 100 of them, to remain at home to care for their loved ones, isolate if need be, and provide care to their own pets, and yes, their own foster animals."

Establishing and communicating essential intake practices

Don't wait for perfect plan to take action

- Time is of the essence
- Look to evolution of stay-at-home orders as a model
  - Urgent steps taken to protect public before all the details were ironed out
  - Modify policy and enforcement as needed
- Make initial changes and announce policy
- Meet daily with team to adjust response and trouble shoot as you go

Shape the path to reduce risk for the public

- Reduce intake hours to core staffing time

- Prevent uncontrolled entry into shelter

- Lock shelter doors

- Block access to parking lot if safe

- Post "emergency" phone numbers prominently – staff can assess situation, interview re COVID exposure and take appropriate action to meet person or admit to shelter

- Post signs and video cameras if needed to discourage abandonment – quote state abandonment law

Beginning March 18, our services will be impacted in the following ways:

Shelter Services
The front doors to the shelter will be locked during business hours and shelter visitors will be directed to contact staff at **530-886-5540** for assistance. Where possible, we are requiring appointments to be made, in advance, for services. Appointments can be made by contacting **530-886-5540**

The following s
access will be l

- Adoption Me
- Lost Pet Re
- Injured or A

Develop and distribute protocol to staff

- Shelter policy

- Concise list of alternative to intake resources for found and owned pets

- Scripts for common conversations

- Clear chain of command for exceptions

Identify key stakeholders to keep in the loop

- Animal control/field service partners
- Transfer partners
- Other shelters and rescues in the community
- Volunteers
- Veterinary clinics
- Contracting entities
- Boards and key elected officials

Communications
- Adoption Partners
- Volunteers/Fosters
- Staff
- County Staff asking for Fosters/Public registering to foster
- General Public-press release, social media
- Contract Cities bringing animals in
- Local DVM's
- Update Web Site with new services
- Post new services
- Send out a press release
- Post signs on all shelter doors
- Post closure on electronic sign
- Scripts for Call Center
- Work on and will give call center new information/services
- Target promotion on specific animals that are left
  - Social Media Posts

Communicate through multiple channels

- Website – popup if possible or other highly visible communication
- Social media (repeatedly and banner photo on facebook)
- Dispatch/311
- News release
- Autoreply for shelter and staff emails
- Consider having volunteers or staff monitor local nextdoor to facilitate found and lost animals

News Releases

Animal Shelters Temporarily Closing to Public April 2

02 April 2020

Lifesaving Services Will Still be Handled During Covid-19
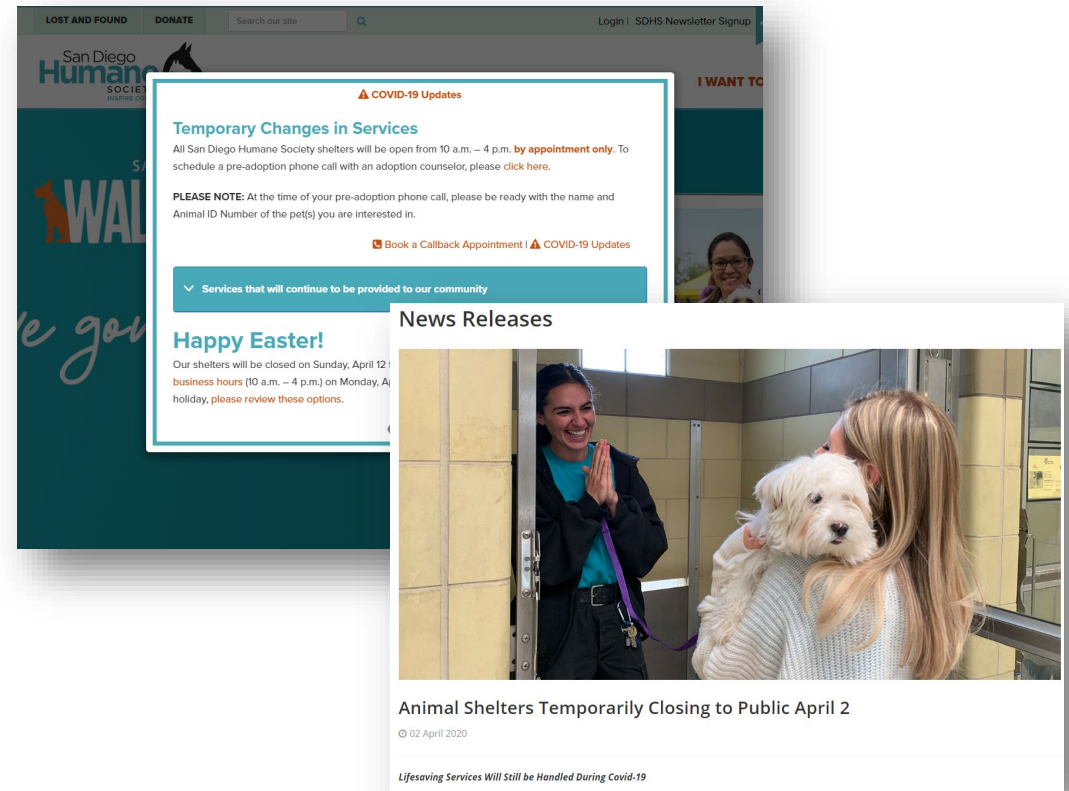
Basics to communicate

- **"The shelter is closed…"**
  - Closed for **regular operations**
  - Closed to the public **except by appointment**
  - Animals are **still receiving care**
- "Here's what to do in an emergency"
  - Provide examples of emergencies
- "Here's where to go for help with lost and found animals and pets for surrender"
- "Here's what to do if you're interested in foster or adoption"
- "Here's where to go for routine services like licensing that can be completed online"
- **"Here's how you can help the shelter during this time"**

Animal Shelter FAQ's During Closure:

IS THE SHELTER OPEN?
No. The shelter is closed to the public for regular operations until further notice. However, we continue to respond to emergencies and provide care for animals, and animals can be reclaimed by their owners, adopted or released to foster care by appointment.

• If you have an emergency such as an injured or dangerous animal to report, call (shelter phone number here)

• If you ___
represe ___

Hours
ACCT Philly will continue to have essential staff working at the shelter to care for the animals and perform associated functions from 10am-6pm, however the door will be locked and adoptions, fosters and intakes will be done differently:

Intakes
- Animal intakes will remain on emergency basis. If you have a pet who you would like to surrender, we ask that you try to keep them as long as possible, and e-mail helpdesk@acctphilly.org if there are resources such as pet food etc that we could provide you with, that will make that possible.
- If you have an emergency, please call 267-385-3800 and choose option 1. This will connect you directly to the Dispatcher and they can arrange to have an animal protection office meet them if it is an emergency.
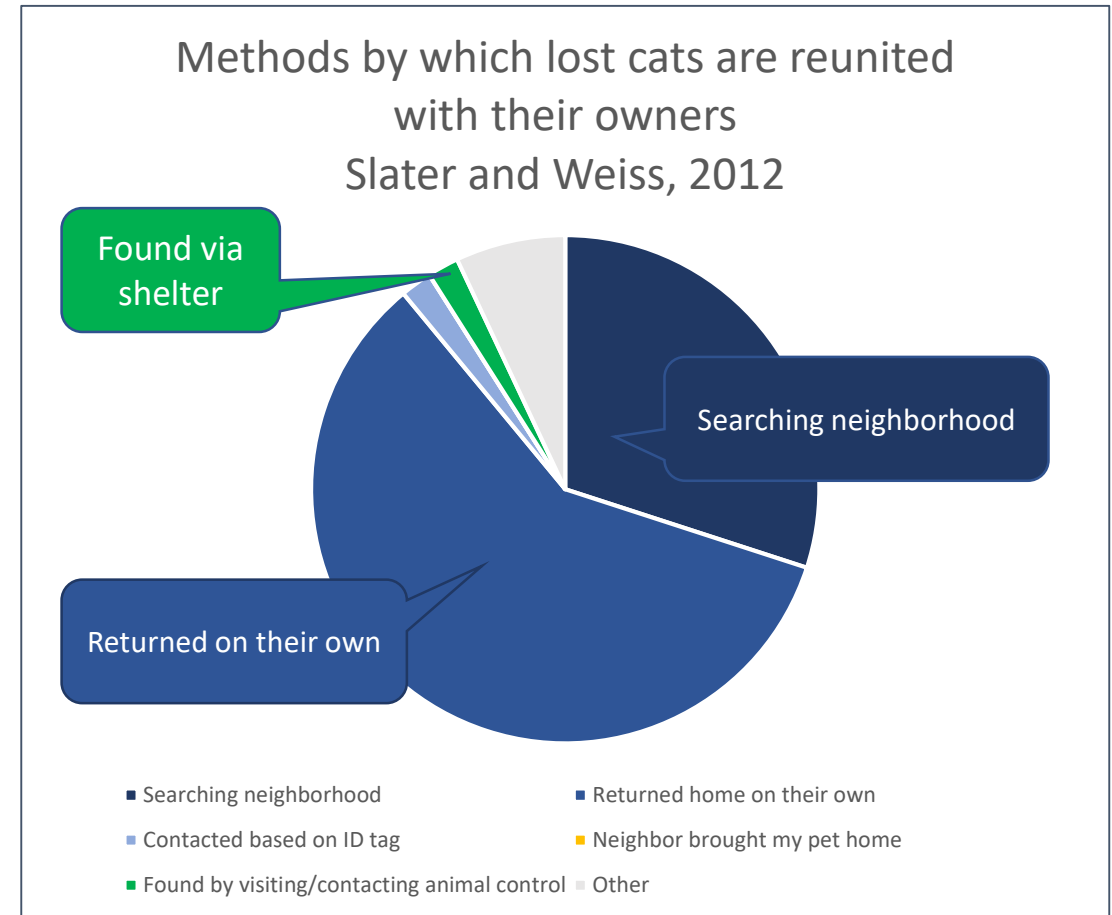
Adopting
- Adoptions will continue but will only be done by appointment. This means that if you are interested in adopting, you will need to fill out the application and make an appointment here and indicate what animal you are interested in adopting
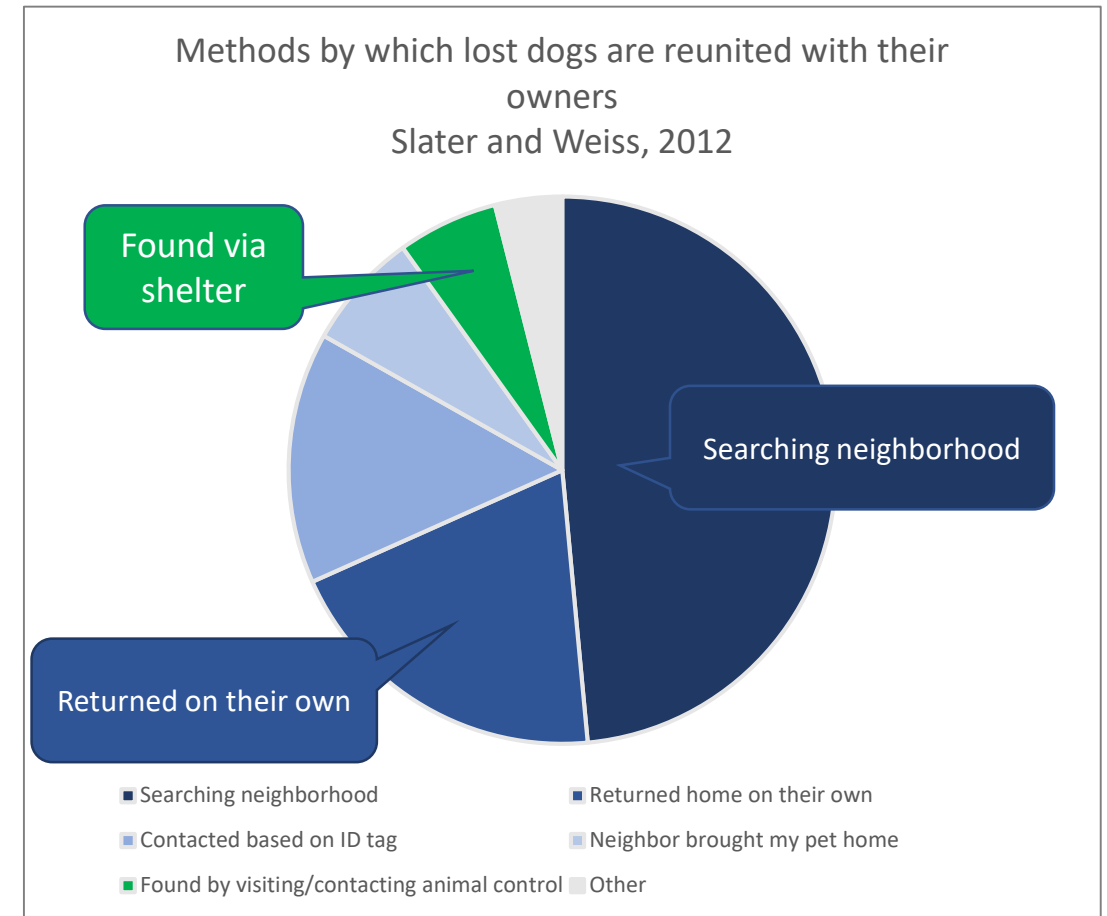
Found cat and dog considerations

Found cats

- Leave healthy cats in place
- Post on social media, nextdoor, flyers in neighborhood **if concern**
  - Prolonged sighting *in the absence of encouragement/feeding*
- Provide information on nuisance abatement
  - Remove food source
  - Purchase cat deterrents online

Methods by which lost cats are reunited with their owners
Slater and Weiss, 2012

Found via shelter

Searching neighborhood

Returned on their own

- Searching neighborhood
- Returned home on their own
- Contacted based on ID tag
- Neighbor brought my pet home
- Found by visiting/contacting animal control
- Other

Found dogs

- Provide links to local lost and found sites, nextdoor, craigslist, shelter website

- Provide links to download and print found pet signs

- Instruct public to leave found animals in place if not sick, injured, dangerous or exigent risk

Methods by which lost dogs are reunited with their owners
Slater and Weiss, 2012

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- Returned home on their own
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- Neighbor brought my pet home
- Found by visiting/contacting animal control
- Other

Talking points for staff

- Apologize for inconvenience
- Thank for concern
- Emphasize benefit for animals – safer outside the shelter
  - People might have a hard time getting to shelter right now
  - More likely to get home if they stay near where they were lost
  - Saving space in shelter for pets of COVID affected people and other emergencies
- Find ways to provide service
  - Provide links
  - Create a found report
  - Provide support if available for finder/foster

TALKING POINTS FOR HEALTHY OUTDOOR CAT INTAKE DIVERSION | COVID RESPONSE

In anticipation of increased shelter intake and a shortage of available labor due to COVID19 and at the recommendation of the National Animal Control Association (NACA) WHS is not currently accepting the intake of healthy outdoor cats.

Additionally, in order to conserve medical supplies and PPE, WHS has suspended routine spay/neuter surgeries, including TNR services.

We are very sorry for the inconvenience and appreciate your concern for the animal, but we are unable to take them into the shelter.

ADDITIONAL TALKING POINTS
Healthy cats are more likely to find their way back home if they are left alone. Encourage the finder to leave the animal alone and/or put them back where they were found.
- Healthy outdoor cats are likely to return home if left alone.
  - Only 2.8% of cats are reunited with their families through the shelter. - Shelter Animals Count, 2018
  - 25% of lost cats return home on their own

If the finder plans to hold on to the cat, offer the following strategies:
- Offer to create a found report
- Advise them to create a found pet flyer in the area the cat was found – Pawboost.com has flyer templates
- Ask them to post the animal on social media sites like Nextdoor, Pawboost, Craigslist lost and found, local Facebook groups
- Go from finder to foster – encourage them to become a foster for WHS

Found kitten considerations

Found kittens

- **"The shelter is not able to accept healthy kittens"**
- "Leave healthy kittens where they are found. The mother is taking care of them"
- Instruct finders who bring kittens to the shelter to return them to where they were found
- If resources permit, distribute kitten kits for truly orphaned
- Link to online resources to support moms and litters safely
- Exceptions for sick, injured, evidence of immediate danger

Recommendations for kitten intake during COVID-19 pandemic

In order to support human and animal health in the midst of the current pandemic, healthy kittens of any age should not be admitted to animal shelters; intake is only appropriate for kittens that are sick, injured, or are in immediate danger.

Kitten season is approaching and, in many places, has arrived – and this year we have additional challenges in terms of intake, care and outcomes – everything that we do in response to helping these little ones.

This year more than ever we must acknowledge that:

1. Healthy, unweaned kittens do not fall into the category of sick or injured.

2. Healthy, unweaned kittens are unlikely to be orphaned – and only become so when they are removed from where their mother is likely nearby.

3. Kittens are healthiest, short and long term, when raised by their mother.

4. Healthy cats/kittens of any age found/seen outside are not an emergency for shelter intake; intake is only appropriate for cats that are sick, injured, dangerous, or are in immediate danger, as in the case of cats that are victims of neglect or cruelty.

As we make decisions and write protocols for this kitten season there are many additional factors that we have to keep in mind so that we balance human and animal health and safety:

https://www.uwsheltermedicine.com/library/resources/animal-services-role-in-covid-19-support#kitten

https://www.sheltermedicine.com/library/resources/?r=animal-services-role-in-covid-19-support#kitten
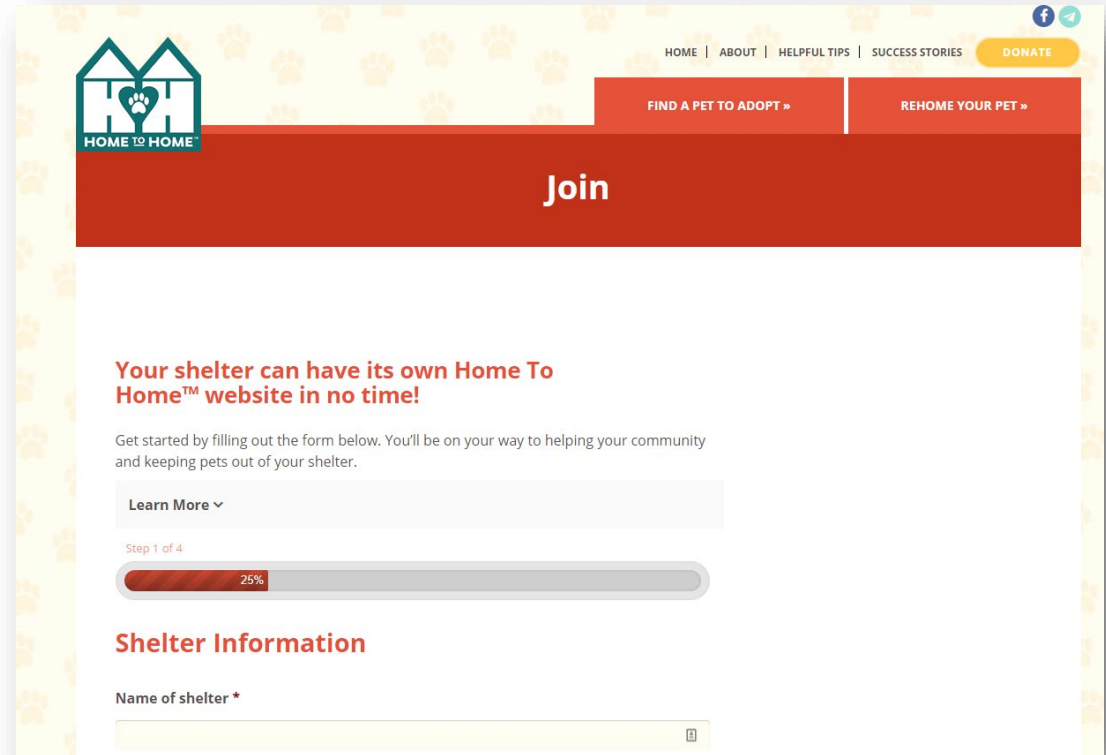
Found kitten resources

- Kitten lady: http://www.kittenlady.org/kitten-care
  - Preparing for adoption resources included
- Maddie's Fund: https://www.maddiesfund.org/orphaned-kitten-care-how-to.htm
- "Don't kitnap the kittens" resources are good but may need to be strengthened
  - Evidence that mom is truly not there AND kittens are distressed
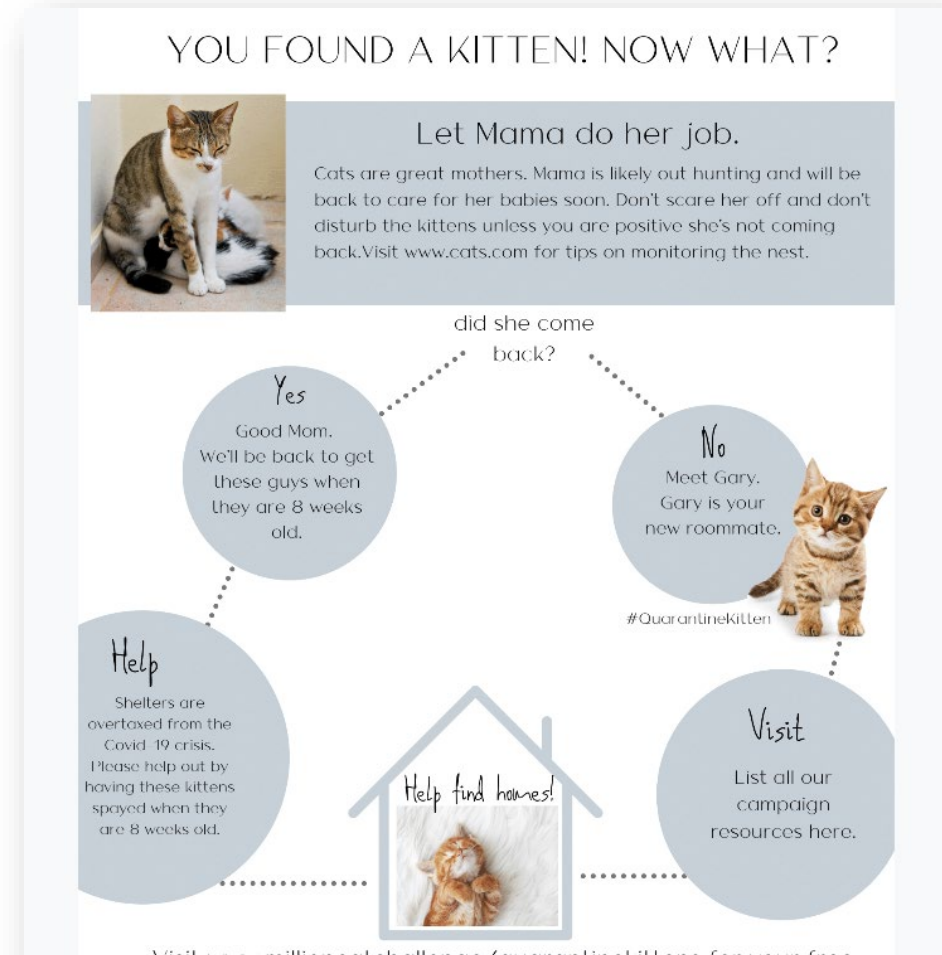
Owner surrender considerations

For owned pets

- Resources to assist with short term issues
  - Food delivery with meals on wheels or by ACOs?
  - Behavioral resources
  - Telemedicine to address medical needs
  - Assistance finding foster directly
- Ask about family/friends/neighborhood options
- Assist with direct rehoming efforts
  - https://home-home.org/join/
  - https://rehome.adoptapet.com/

Proactive surrender prevention

Role of field services

Role of field services

- Assess situations in the field for response priority
- Pick up and deliver animals where possible rather than having public come to shelter
- Deliver supplies and other support services (e.g. microchip scan) as needed to keep animals out of shelter
- Respond to COVID and non-COVID related emergencies

Maintaining the balance

Balance intake and outcomes

- More animals = more risk, reduced capacity to respond to emergent needs
- Length of stay and crowding biggest risk factors for disease and increased care needs per animal
- Make plans to balance intake with outcomes on an ongoing basis
- Maximize RTO: in field, fee waived
- Where live outcomes are limited, intake decisions must be even more rigorous

In > Out = Problem
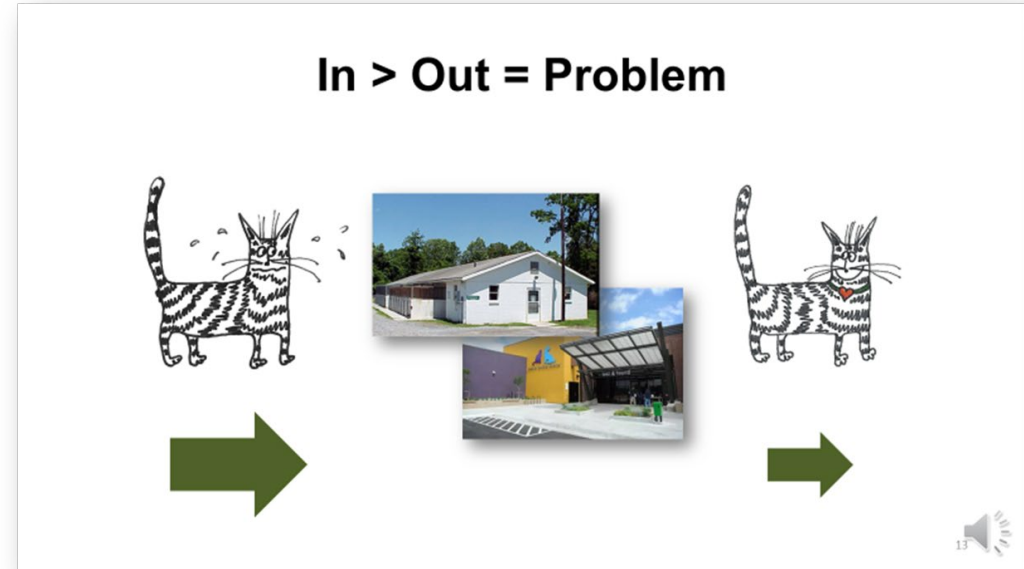
Let's chat
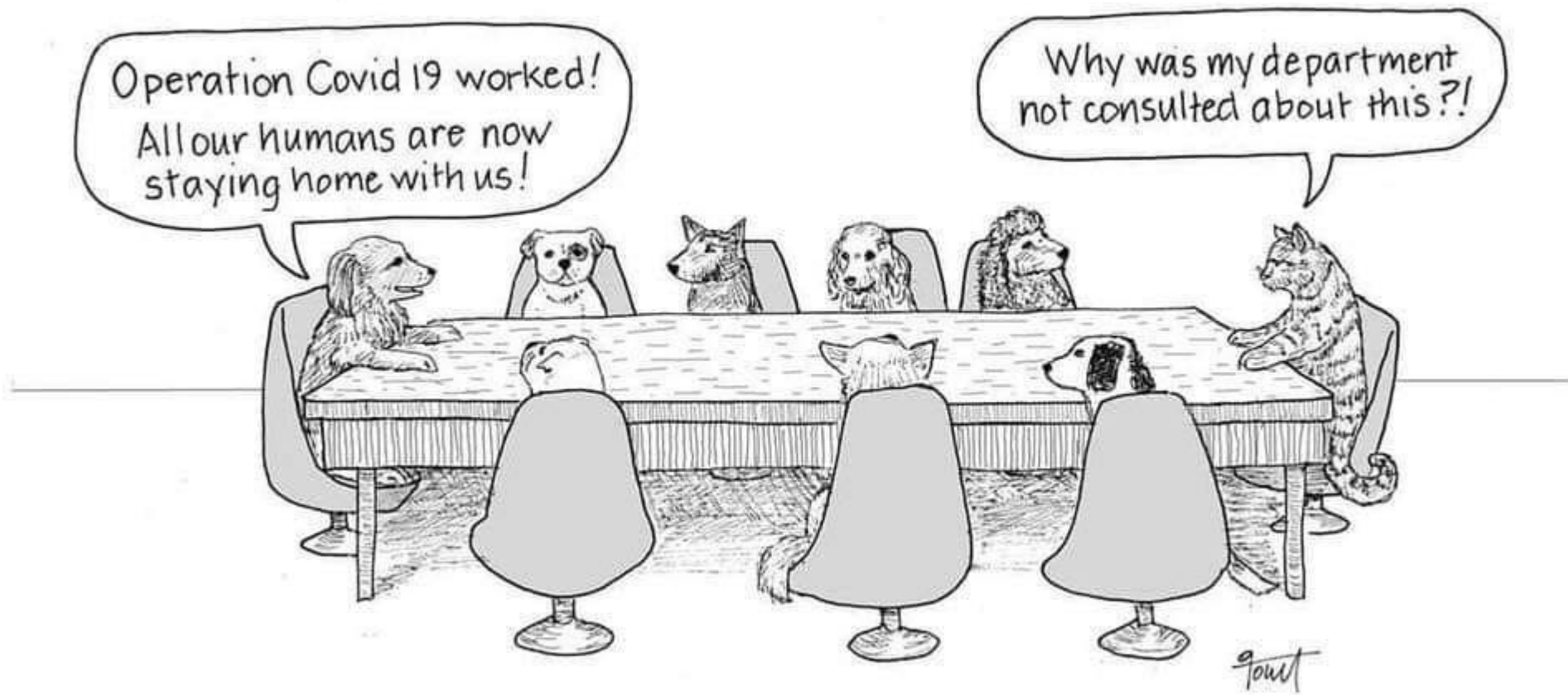
More supporting materials coming soon

- www.sheltermedicine.com

- www.uwsheltermedicine.com

- https://mailchi.mp/animalwelfa
redigest/subscribe to stay in the
loop