

July 28, 2010

Ms. Bett Sundermeyer  
[REDACTED]

Houston, TX [REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Sundermeyer,

Thank you for writing to us, and for letting us know about the issues you've been having with our support of open admission animal shelters.

As per your request, I have removed your name from our mailing list. Because our mailings are prepared weeks in advance, you may still receive a few more. If so, please disregard them.

Like you, we at PETA are saddened by the fact that many animals in shelters are euthanized for lack of good homes. We agree that all animals deserve responsible, loving families and a chance to thrive. Sadly, however, the negligence of breeders, pet stores, and "guardians" who fail to sterilize their animal companions has produced a critical overpopulation problem that animal shelters simply lack the resources to address. A tragic shortage of space, funds, and caring people willing to share their lives with animal companions forces shelters to put millions of dogs and cats to death every year. Open-admission shelters, committed to keeping animals safe and off the streets, do not have the option of avoiding difficult decisions by turning away the victims of overpopulation.

Please consider that humane societies across the United States have the unfortunate and often thankless task of resolving problems created by an irresponsible society. Too many people continue to dismiss the need to spay and neuter their animal companions, and their negligence results in the births of millions of homeless and unwanted animals every year. Animal shelters open their doors to these "disposable" animals, acknowledging the problem that so many others do their best to ignore. It is very sad that many animals who end up in shelters never find homes, but we can hardly blame this tragic state of affairs on the shelters themselves. Unfortunately, euthanasia is sometimes the most humane option for animals born into a hostile world. It is administered by kind, courageous people who don't want animals to suffer.

Many people believe that "no-kill" shelters offer a compassionate alternative to euthanasia. However, supporters of no-kill shelters are probably unaware of the inherent problems with such facilities. There may be a handful of well-run no-kill shelters; if so, they are exceptions to the rule. At most no-kill shelters, many animals spend years in cages. They become withdrawn, severely depressed, or

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aggressive, which further decreases their chances of adoption. "Cageless" facilities may avoid this problem but only at the cost of causing others, such as an increased incidence of disease and fighting among animals. Also, a stay in a shelter should be a temporary expedient for dogs and cats, not a permanent arrangement. Dogs and cats need more than food, water, and shelter from the elements; they also need—and deserve—companionship, respect, and love, as well as the freedom to play and walk about at will. We believe that condemning animals to life in a cage or pen or at the end of a rope, deprived of such basic requirements as comfort and affection, is a form of cruelty.

No-kill shelters are also often referred to as "limited admission" shelters because they do not accept every animal who comes through their doors. Some no-kill shelters take in only highly attractive, young, or purebred animals or animals from the police stations of designated municipalities. And when they are full to capacity, they don't accept any new animals. Instead, they refer people to facilities that euthanize. But some people, mistakenly believing that it's more humane to let animals fend for themselves than to administer a quick, peaceful death, end up abandoning their animals on roadsides instead of taking them to shelters that euthanize.

Humane societies are not required to adopt euthanasia policies; each shelter makes its own decision. However, animal welfare agencies such as the Humane Society of the United States acknowledge that a quick and painless death is preferable to a life of loneliness, frustration, and misery in a small shelter enclosure. It is always difficult to face the decision of whether or not to euthanize an animal, but to evade the decision at the cost of animals' quality of life neither helps animals nor solves the overpopulation crisis.

The only way to address this crisis is directly and aggressively. Currently, in the United States, several cities and counties, including Los Angeles and San Mateo, Calif.; King County, Wash.; and Rock Island, Ill., as well as the state of Rhode Island, are doing just that by passing strong spay/neuter laws for all animals. Not surprisingly, areas with such spay/neuter laws have reported significant reductions in the numbers of animals taken to their animal shelters and subsequently euthanized. However, until all cities adopt similar laws, animals will continue to breed at uncontrollable rates.

We appreciate everything that you do for animals. If I can be of any further assistance, please feel free to contact me by e-mail at [MeganV@fsap.org](mailto:MeganV@fsap.org) or by mail sent to my attention at our Norfolk, Virginia headquarters at 501 Front Street, Norfolk, VA 23510.

Sincerely,



Megan Vasiles  
Correspondence Assistant  
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