



## Myth: Life saving strategies lead to warehousing of animals which leads to unhealthy animals

J.M. Scarlett, DVM, PhD  
 Director, Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at Cornell University

## Warehouse

According to Webster . . .

- storehouse for goods or merchandise

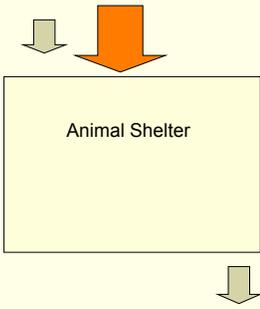



## Warehousing

*According to Webster*

- To set aside or accumulate, as for future use
- To confine or house in conditions suggestive of a warehouse
- Informal definition: to confine (e.g., the mentally ill) to large institutions for long-term custodial care

## What is the basis for the myth?



Animal Shelter

If intake exceeds outflow the options are:

- restrict intake
- good foster care network
- effective adoption program
- transfer programs
- enhanced RTO efforts

[euthanasia]

## My concern as a veterinarian

**Failure to follow these strategies can lead to**

- Overcrowding
- Lengthy stays



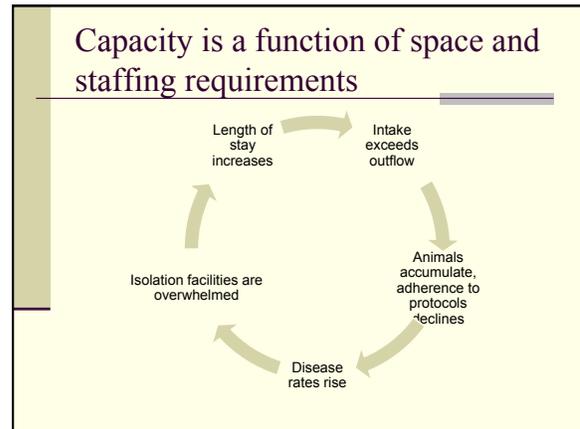
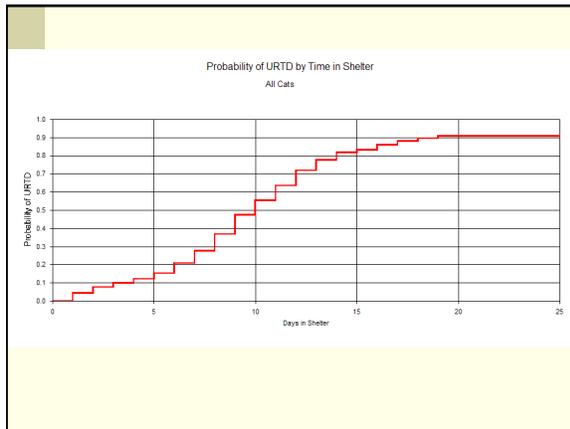
**Leading to . . .**

- Sick animals
- Deteriorating behavior
- Poor welfare

## Length of stay and health

- Increasing lengths of stay
  - Increase the risk of exposure to infxs agents
  - Tie up needed cage space
  - Increase the risk of deleterious behaviors





### Five keys to avoiding these problems

- Good shelter management
- Make health of the animals a high priority
- Goal-driven health program
- Efficient flow-through of animals
- Disease surveillance / monitoring system



### Keys to avoiding these problems



"I've seen this before: Combustion due to extreme resistance to change."

- **Good overall management of the shelter**
  - Good leadership
  - Staff and volunteer training programs
  - Clear responsibilities
  - Accountability and rewards
  - People management that leads to good morale
  - Other management techniques

### Health of the animals must be a high priority

- **How is health made a priority issue?**
  - Appointment and regular meetings of a health committee
  - State of the art, written protocols
  - Identification and empowerment of an "infection control" staff member
    - Job is to oversee the **implementation** of health-related protocols and monitor the effects
  - Clear channels of communication to the shelter manager / Executive Director

### Health of the animals must be a high priority

- **How is health made a priority issue?**
  - Staff and volunteer training
  - Develop a goal-driven health program
    - E.g., reduce the number of sick cats by 5% next year.
  - Regular feedback to staff/volunteers



## Goal-driven health program

- Health related goals established on a regular basis
- Reviewed regularly
- Progress reports back to the volunteers and staff



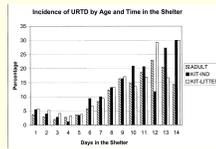
## Efficient flow-through of animals

### Regular assessment of the flow of animals

- Identify the potential bottlenecks
  - E.g., monitor time to examination and vaccination, time to neutering, too many sick animals
- Innovative, productive adoption program
- Daily assessment of progress of each animal

## Disease surveillance / monitoring program

- Need to monitor how the population is doing
  - Disease increasing / decreasing? – is Isolation overflowing?
  - Disease manifestations changing?
  - Time to cure
  - Other measures



## Many other essential practices

### For example:

- Vaccinate all animals on entry
  - Only exception are the very young or very sick
- Isolate animals with signs of infectious disease
  - TRULY isolate!!!
- Stress reducing strategies
- Intelligent traffic flow of people and animals

## Questions?

