Helping Adopters Succeed

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Adopter Support is based on Chapter 16 of *Animal Behavior for Shelter Veterinarians and Staff*. It was developed during my tenure at the Michigan Humane Society. MHS is credited with many of the photos.

This Webinar Introduces How To:

- Create an adopter support program

- Use adopter support to evaluate animal adjustment and your adoption process

- Use what you learn to improve and grow!

Raise Your Hand
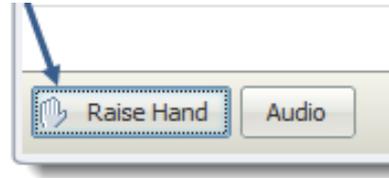
How many have an Adopter Support program that is working well?

How many have an Adopter Support program that is NOT working well?

How many don't have an Adopter Support program yet, but want to set one up?

What Do Adopters Want?

Adopters Want:

- A healthy well-adjusted pet

- One who will fit into their family

- No hidden problems

- A pet who will meet their expectations for care and training

- Help with any problems that occur

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People Want Adoption Success!

We Want Adoption Success Too!

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Measuring Adoption Success

☐ **PERMANENCY:**
Animal stays in the adoptive home long-term

☐ **HUMAN-ANIMAL BOND:**
Adopters develop a good relationship with the animal

☐ **QUALITY OF LIFE:**
Animal has physical and psychological needs met

☐ **CUSTOMER SERVICE:**
Adopters enjoy the adoption experience

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Goals for an Adoption Program:

Sufficient NUMBER of adoptions AND high level of adoption SUCCESS!

Opposite of Success = Failure

Are returns a failure?

Relinquishment to other sources:

- Friend, family, co-worker

- Another animal organization

- Stranger

Animal stays in the home but experiences an unacceptable quality of life, or even abuse

Adopters discourage others from adopting from your organization and do not come back

Adopter Support =

- Contacting adopters

- Finding out how things are going

- Providing guidance on problems

- Getting feedback on the adoption experience

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Contacting Adopters Post-Adoption

- Periodic

- Proactive

- Can tell us how individual animals are doing

- Can tell us how we are doing as an adoption agency

- Can connect people with help they need

- Combines results so they may be analyzed

- Can help adopters become supporters

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Adopter Support Must be Sustainable!

- If you can't keep up or manage Adopter Support, it can become a burden.

- If you find out about problems adopters are having, you need to help people fix them.

- If the data is collected but never used, then what is the point?

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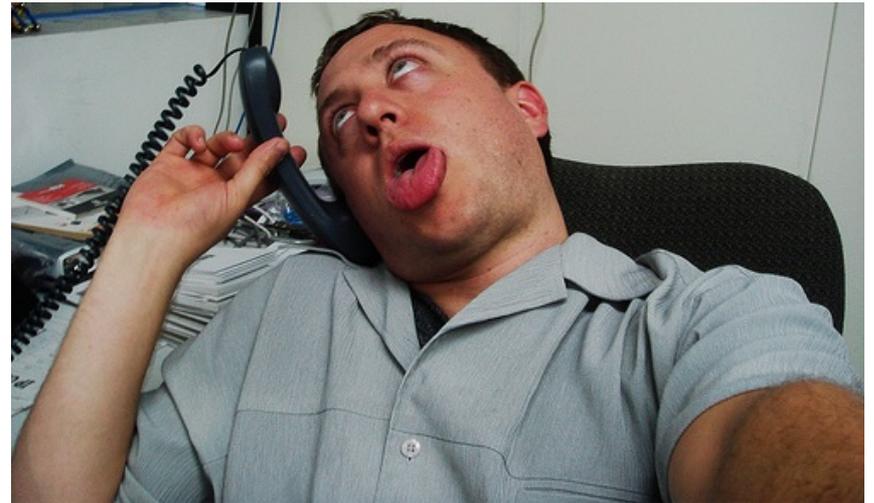
Creating an Adopter Support Program

Program Components

1. Establishing the program

2. Developing a volunteer team

3. Contacting adopters

4. Developing the online survey(s)

5. Setting up ways for adopters to get help

6. Creating and using contact lists

7. Using adopter feedback

Pitching Adopter Support

- ➤ Staff champion, senior level buy-in

- ➤ Promote internally all levels

- ➤ Emphasize benefits

- ➤ Minimize staff stress/fear

- ➤ Provide updates

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The Human Component

Who Do You Need?

LEADERS:

- Program Coordinator
- Technical lead

FOLLOWERS:

- Phone volunteers

Program Coordinator

- Good organizational skills are critical

- Consistency

- Management of volunteers

- Access to operations staff and senior management

- Best role for staff person

- Does not need to be their only "hat"

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Technical Lead
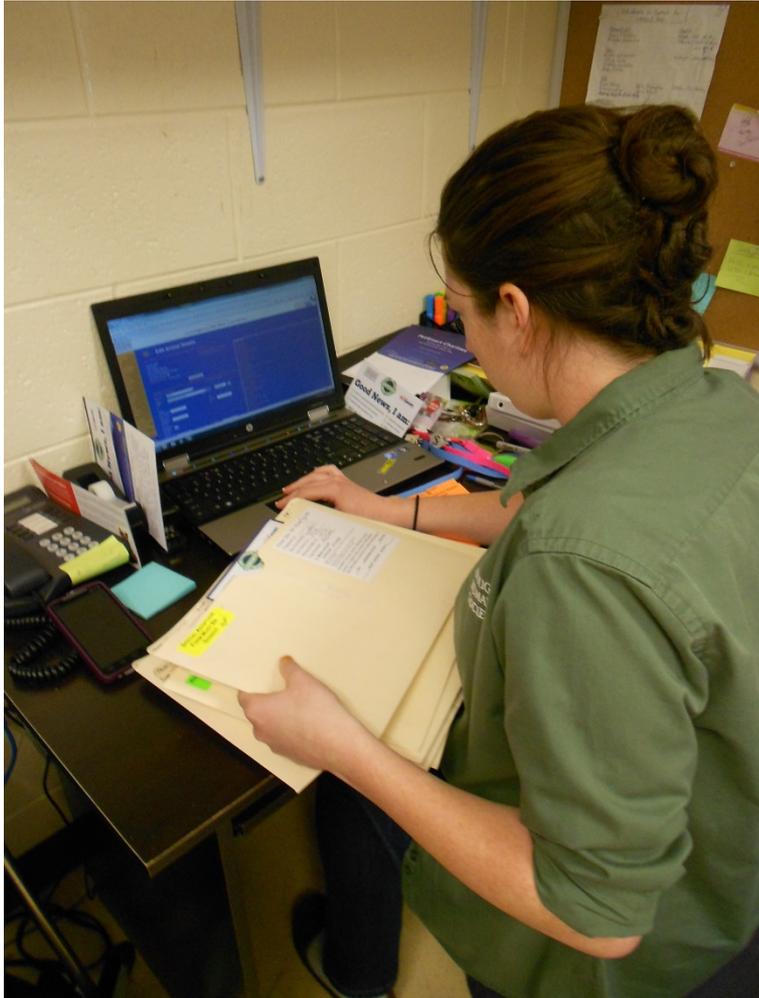
- Able to use shelter software

- Reliable

- Data-driven

- Problem-solver

- Wise to have a back-up:

– Split the work

– Cross-train

– Returns versus calling lists

Finding Phone Volunteers

Qualities to Seek

- Customer service background

- Like pets AND people

- Trust with adopter information

- Can commit to a weekly shift

- Basic computer and phone skills

- Efficient, compassionate, common sense

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Volunteer Challenges

Volunteer Turnover

- Call. Survey. Repeat.

Customer Service

- Good Intentions, Bad Advice

How Many Volunteers?

Depends on:

- Annual adoptions

- How long each survey takes

- Timing of calls

  – Daytime: more messages on voicemail

  – Evening/weekend: more time talking with adopters
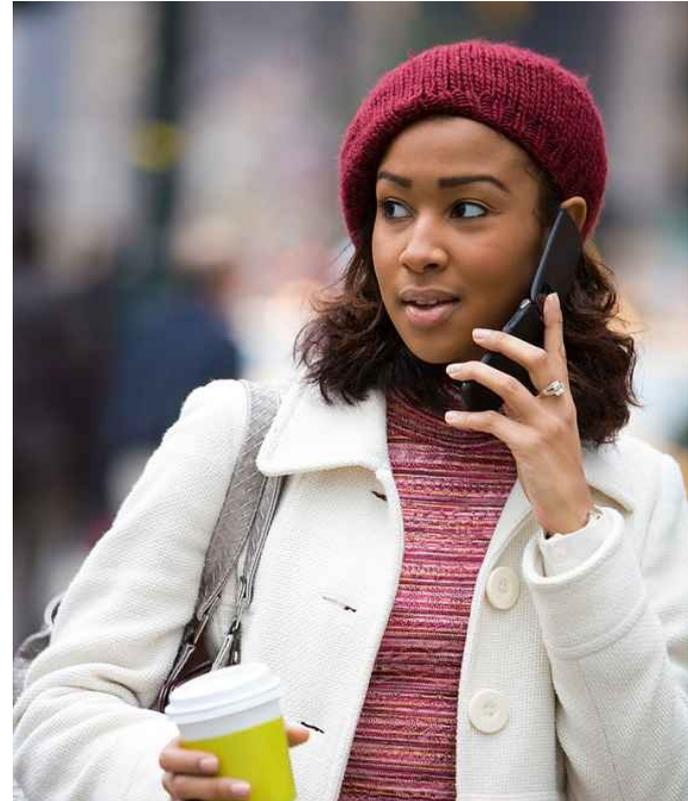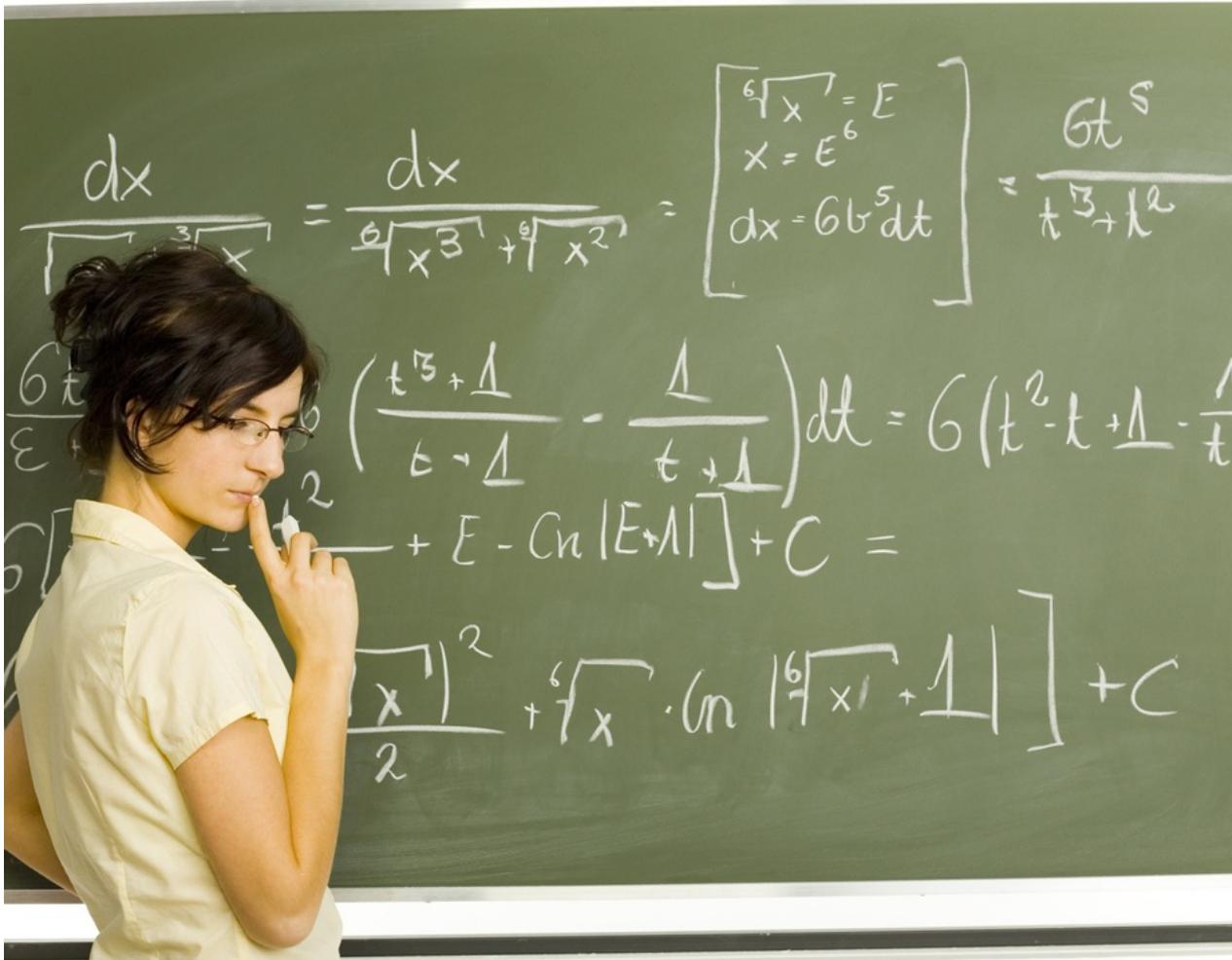
TIME FOR THE MATH!

Large Adoption Agency

- 9,127 adoptions ÷ 52 weeks per year = 176 adoptions/week

- 80% electronically = 141 emails

- 20% by phone = 35 calls per week

- One volunteer can make 20 calls in 2 hours

- 35 calls ÷ 20 calls/shift = 1.75 volunteers per survey

- 1.75 volunteers X 3 surveys = 5.25 volunteer phone callers

- May need a back-up for vacations, etc.

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Small Adoption Agency

- 1,000 annual adoptions ÷ 52 weeks = 19/week

- Contact 70% electronically = 13 emails

- Contact 30% by phone = 6 calls

- One volunteer can make 6 calls in <30 min.

- In one 2-hour weekly shift, a single volunteer could:

- ✓ Create the week's calling list

- ✓ Email adopters inviting them to take a survey

- ✓ Phone adopters without email addresses at 3 points post-adoption to take live survey responses

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WOW! We Could Do This!

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Start Them Off Right

- Volunteer manual

- Demonstrate

- Volunteer fills out survey while trainer handles call on speaker phone

- Switch

- Volunteer does both

- Turn them loose!
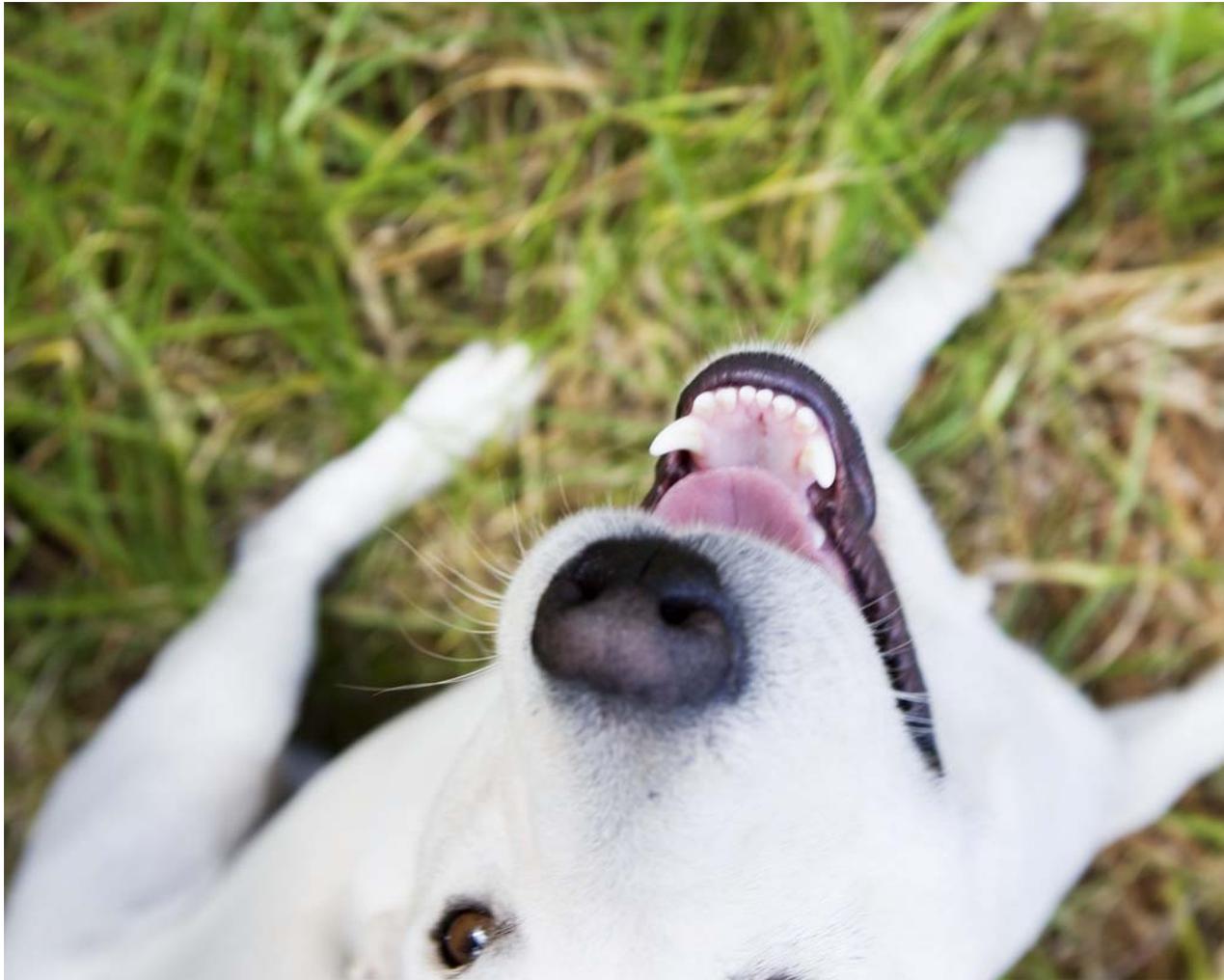
Contacting Adopters

Bye! Good Luck! Call Us!
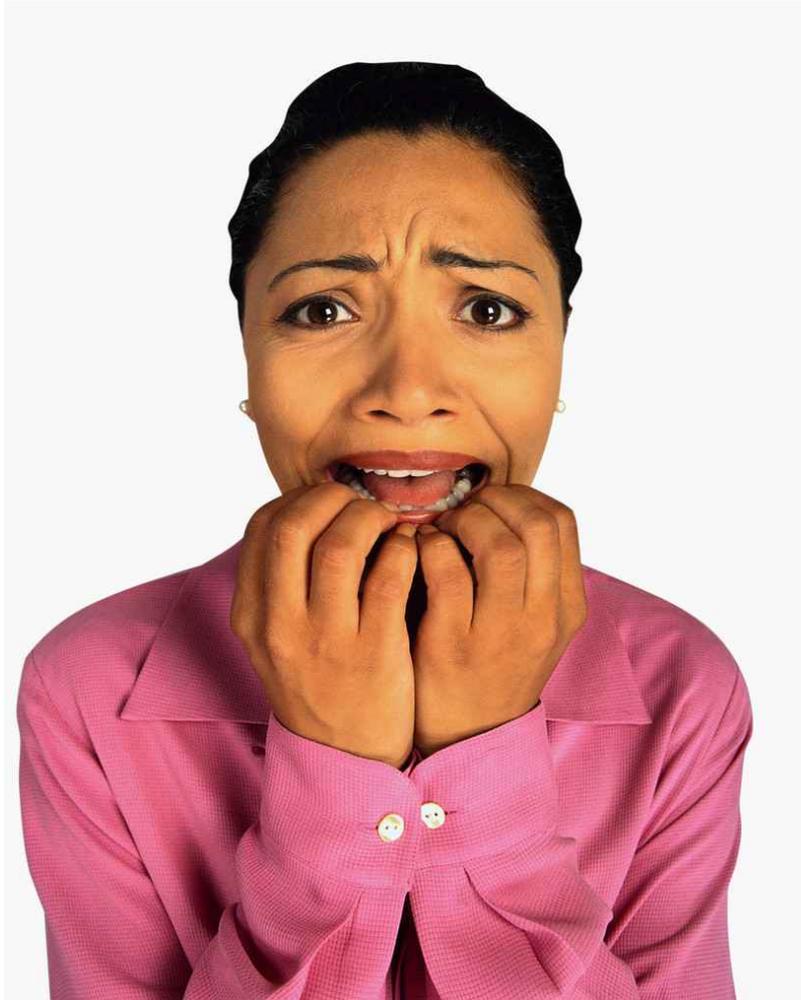
Contact: Which Adopters ?

- "Iffy" adopters?

- You cannot predict which adopters will have problems

- All Adopters!

Contact: How Should You Do It?
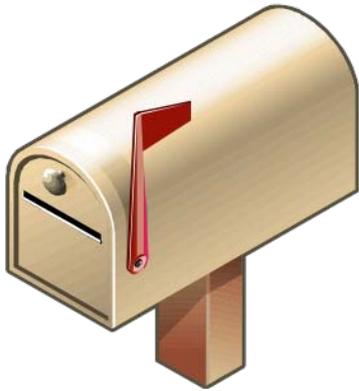
Letters? Expensive! Slow!
Data Entry Required!

10,000 adoptions X 3 contacts X 48¢ each = $14,400 in postage alone

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Contact: Phone Calling?

- Takes time

- 2 minutes to leave a message

- 10-15 minutes to interview

- Personal attention

- Only way to contact some adopters (20%)

- Difficult to analyze results w/o survey

Contact: Email?

- Affordable

- Less personal

- Not quite universal

- 85% of adults online*

- 18% haven't checked their email in 30 days

- Younger and more affluent people more likely to be online

* Source: Zickuhr, K. (2013) Who's not online and why.
Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, Washington, D.C

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What do you want to know?

When should you reach out?

Post-Adoption Experience

- "Honeymoon phase"

- Problems arise, bond develops

- Advice from vet, friends, neighbors, online—everyone except you!

- Depending on the advice, their actions, & the animal: problems either diminish or don't

- Unresolved problems = RELINQUISHMENT

- Bonding can delay/prevent relinquishment

Which Problems When?

- Minor problems:
  Easily fixed, somewhat expected

- More serious problems:
  Need outside help

All problems are serious to an adopter!

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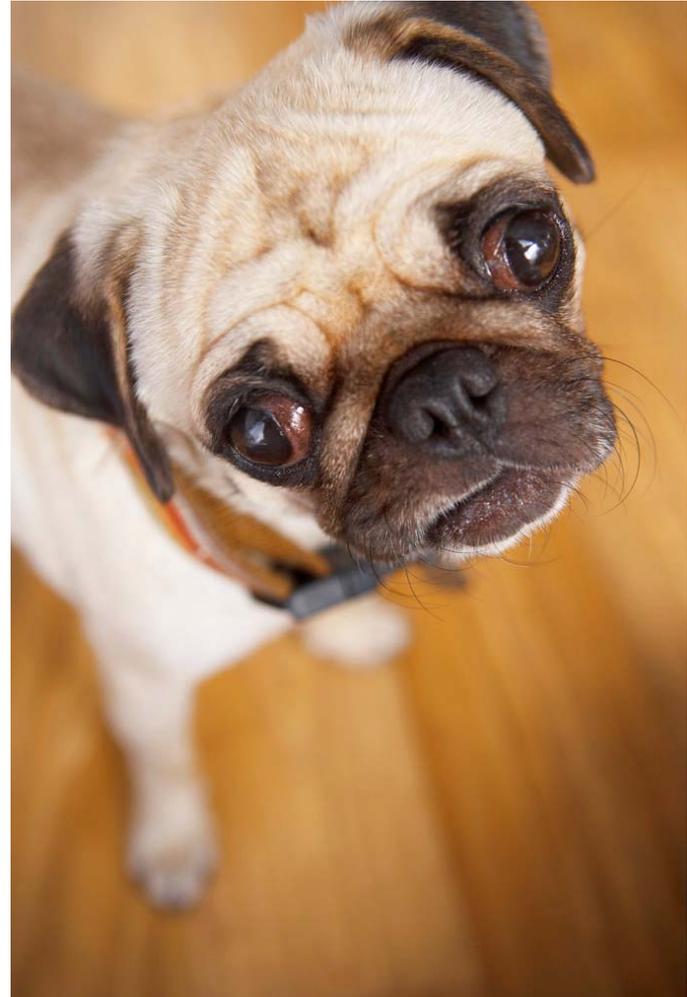
Contact: When and Why?

Depends on what you want to find out:

- Initial adjustment: (1 week)

- Customer service: (1 week)

- Health issues: (1 week, 1 month, 3-6 months, 1 year)

- Behavior changes over time: (1 month, 3-6 months, 1 year)

- Adoption permanency & quality of life: (1 year)

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Start Simple!

- Contact adopter ONCE

- One week post-adoption

- Contact adopters TWICE

- One week and one month post-adoption

Online Surveys

Online Surveys Offer:

- Ease of use
- Ability to ask detailed questions
- Affordable
- Same survey to all adopters
- Analysis is done for you
- Can export or print results

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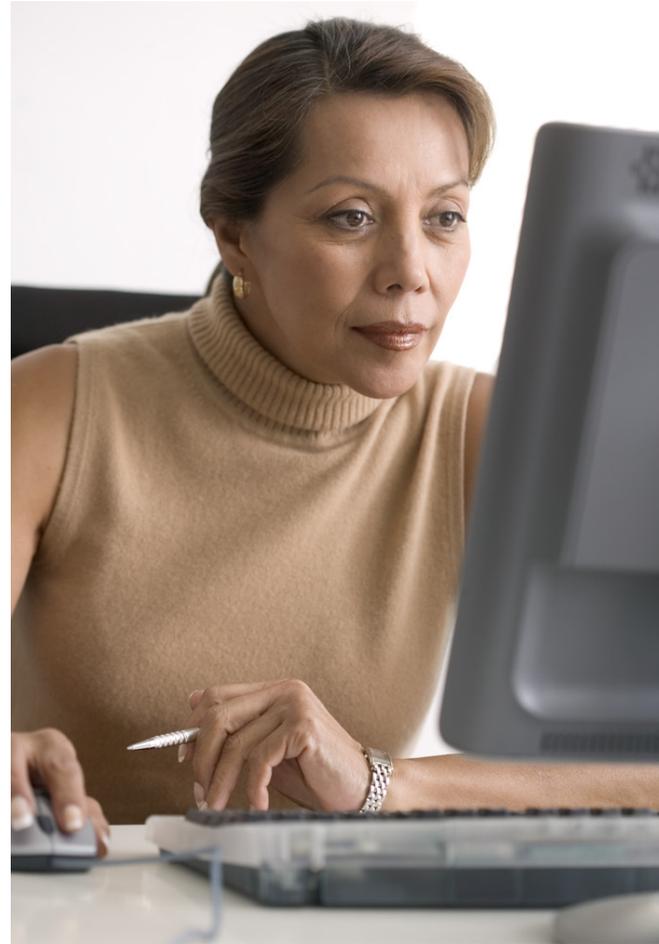
Choosing Your Online Survey

- Many different online surveys!

- Selection factors: referrals, cost, ease of use & features

- Ask for a non-profit discount

- Expect to pay a few hundred dollars per year

- Many other uses

Creating Your Survey: Introduction

- Your logo at the top

- Introduction

- Thank them for adopting

- How to get help

- Reward at end

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Using Skip Logic
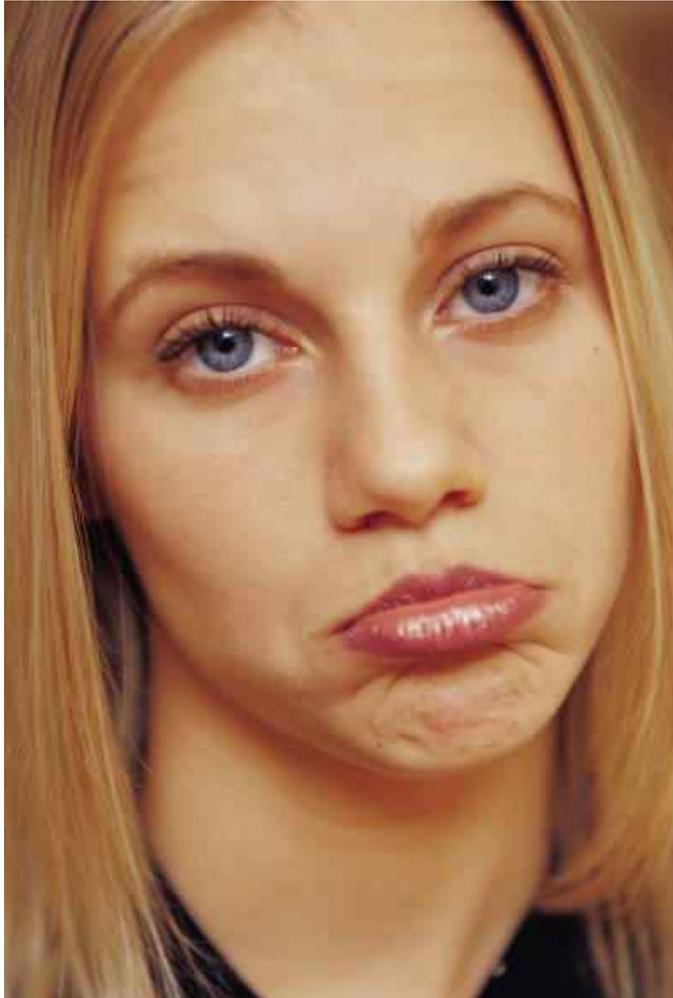
- No longer has pet?

- Tool in some surveys to create different paths

- Ask where pet is now

- Why pet given up

- Skip to end of survey

- Those who still have their pets will never see these questions

- Dog questions, cat questions, etc.

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Demographics

- Species

- Age of pet (at time of adoption)

- Location adopted

- New name?
Fun questions?

- Still have pet?
(Where is pet now?)

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Health Questions

- Initially & change over time

- Which problems?

- Appointment at vet (which one?)

- How to get help:

  – Please contact me!

  – Phone number or email
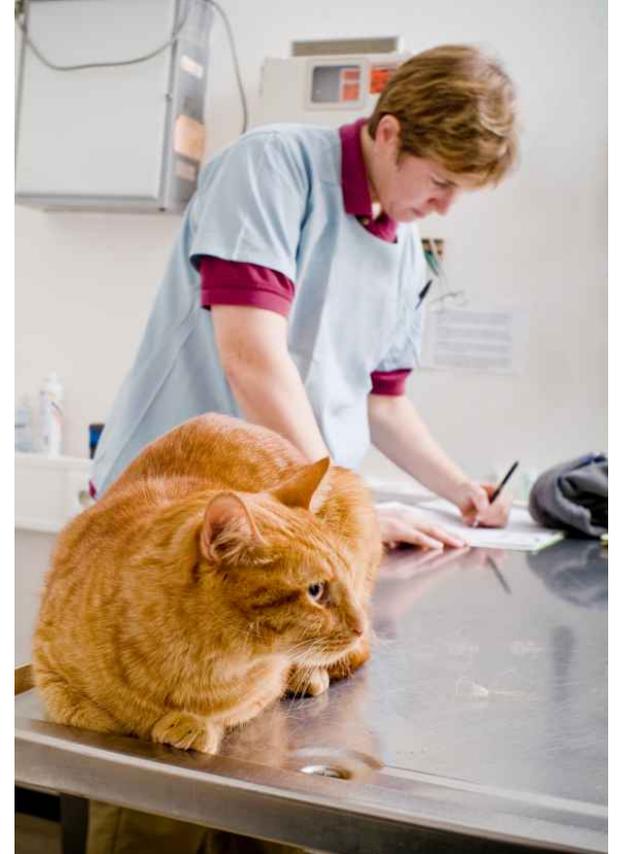
  – Refer to webpage

Behavior Questions

- Initially & change over time

- Which problems?

- How to get help:

  – Please contact me!

  – Phone number or email

  – Refer to webpage

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Behavior Questions

- Dog training

- Crating?

- Discipline?

- Separate question paths for different species

- Dogs: Can take things away easily? Gentle play? Likes other dogs? How about people?

- Cats: Gets along with other pets? Likes petting?

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Customer Service Questions

- Hours of operation

- Cleanliness of facility

- Treatment of the animals

- Friendliness of staff & volunteers

- Efficiency/promptness

- Staff/volunteer knowledge

- Overall value for amount paid

- Telephone assistance

- Overall adoption experience

- 1-5 rating scale, Very Satisfied to Very Dissatisfied, Not Appl.

- Comments

Other Questions

- How do adopters learn about you?

- Animal identification

- Evaluation of other services

- Evaluation of Adopter Support program

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Testing Your Survey

- Get input on how you've worded the questions

- Time how long it takes to respond: 10–12 minutes

- Use a test survey for 2–4 weeks

- Adjust questions based on responses

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Using Incentives & Reminders

- Allay their fears: no fundraising and no sharing of their email address

- Give them a treat: something of value

  – Emailable coupon

  – Drawing for free vet care

- Send one or two reminders

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If you build it, they will come: BE READY!

Problem Solving: Helping Adopters

Set up more than one way for adopters to get the help they need:

- Phone for "urgent" issues (>75%)

- Email for less urgent issues (<25%)

- Website when personal assistance is not needed

Phone Assistance

- Stress on overburdened phone operators

- Automated sorting: health, behavior, all other questions

- Toll-free is cheap, encourages contact from out-of-area adopters

- Assign to staff; link to behavior hotline; partner with behavior advisors

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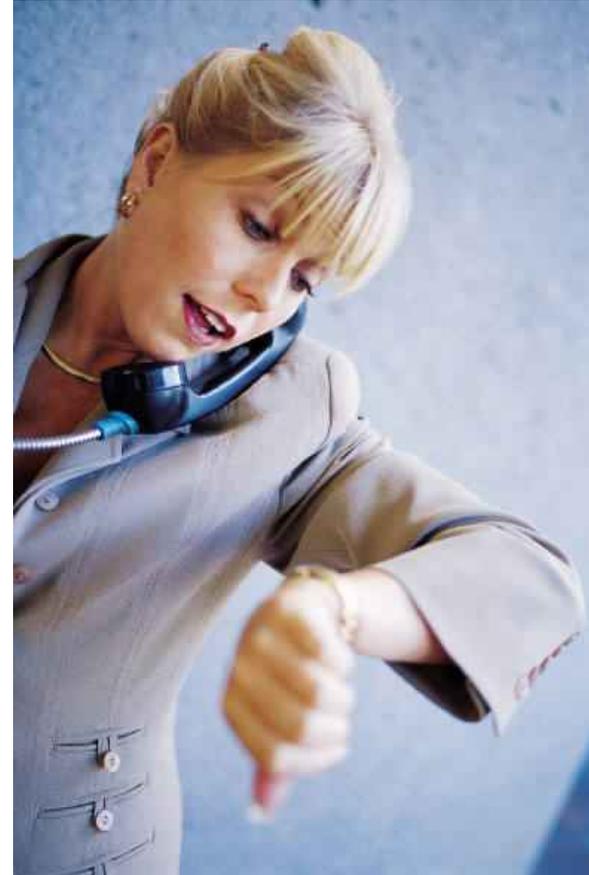
Email Assistance

- AdopterSupport@xyzspca.org

- Who will receive this email?

- Route health, behavior, customer service emails

- Standardized responses

- Know when to refer to a specialist (aggression)

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Prompt Response!

Adopter Support Web Page

- Contact info

- Directions

- Behavior & health info downloads

- Dog licenses and dog parks, emergency vet clinics, lost or found pet info, etc.

- Adopter chat lists & e-lists, sharing adoption stories

- Adoptable animals (Petfinder)

- Links, merchandise

- May be password-protected

Creating Contact Lists

Weekly Call Sheet

Assignment	One Week	One Month	One Year	0		Adoptions				# Contacts		
Detroit	Jim	Linda	Vicki	1		No. Emails	82%	% Email		Phone Contacts Wk		
Rochester	Gimbu	Annette	Annette	0		No Bad Emails	0%	% Bad		Phone Contacts Mo		
Westland	Grace	Cheryl	Joan R	1		Valid Emails	82%	% Valid		Phone Contacts Yr		
Offsite	Linda K	Linda K	Linda K									

Site	Animal ID	Operation By	Name Last	Name First	Animal Name	Type	Primary Breed	Phone Number	Email Address	Week Mark	Month Mark
PS1	12345	Lreider	Jones	John	Boomer	Dog	Poodle	222-222-2222	jones@msn.com		
PS1	12346	Kjohnson	Smith	Candice	Esmeralda	Cat	DSH	222-222-2223	csmith@msn.com		
PS1	12347	Kjohnson	Smith	Candice	Amber	Cat	DLH	222-222-2224	csmith@msn.com		
PS1	12348	Cpurchase	Lasco	Kathryn	Jasper	Cat	DSH	222-222-2225		■	■
PS1	12349	Rortmann	Duncan	Linda	Zappa	Cat	DSH	222-222-2226	duncan@yahoo.com		
PS1	12350	Lreider	Arroya	Miguel	Puffin	Cat	DLH	222-222-2227	arroya@it.net		
PS1	12351	Kjohnson	Ruiz	Jose	Zsa-zsa	Dog	Shepherd	222-222-2228	ruiz@ameritech.net		
PS1	12352	Kwilson	Telemann	Richard	Missylou	Dog	Terrier	222-222-2229	tele@sbcglobal.net		
PS1	12353	Cpurchase	Bach	Johann	Baron	Dog	Pitbull	222-222-2230	bach@music.com		
PS1	12354	Rortmann	Boomerin	Krista	Sirius	Dog	Retriever	222-222-2231	boomerin@msn.com		
PS1	12355	Lreider	Alletto	Kristy	Cocoa	Dog	Poodle	222-222-2232	alletto@hotmail.com		
PS1	12356	Kjohnson	Stevenson	Chrissy	Lily	Dog	Peke	222-222-2233		■	■
PS1	12357	Kwilson	Rice	Lindsay	Clancy	Dog	Pitbull	222-222-2234	rice@food.com		
PS1	12358	Cpurchase	James	Joan	Annabelle	Dog	Westie	222-222-2235	james@yahoo.com		
PS1	12359	Rortmann	Tilya	Erin	Lisa	Dog	Yorkie	222-222-2236	alj@ameritech.net		
PS1	12360	Lreider	Al-jardin	Ilya	Velma	Rat	Standard	222-222-2237		■	■
PS1	12361	Kjohnson	Ming	Hon	Daphne	Rabbit	Lop	222-222-2238	ming@hotmail.com		

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Weekly Call Sheets

- Technical Lead Volunteer creates weekly call sheets on Monday mornings

- Run report of returned animals

- Run weekly report (Sat-Fri) of adopted animals

- Delete returns (cross off older sheets)

- Print out and put in binder for callers to use

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Send out the Emails

- Thank them for adopting

- Invite to take survey

- Mention reward

- Include opt-out

- "Imaginary" return address: AdoptionTeam@xyzspca.org gets bounced mail

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Make the Calls
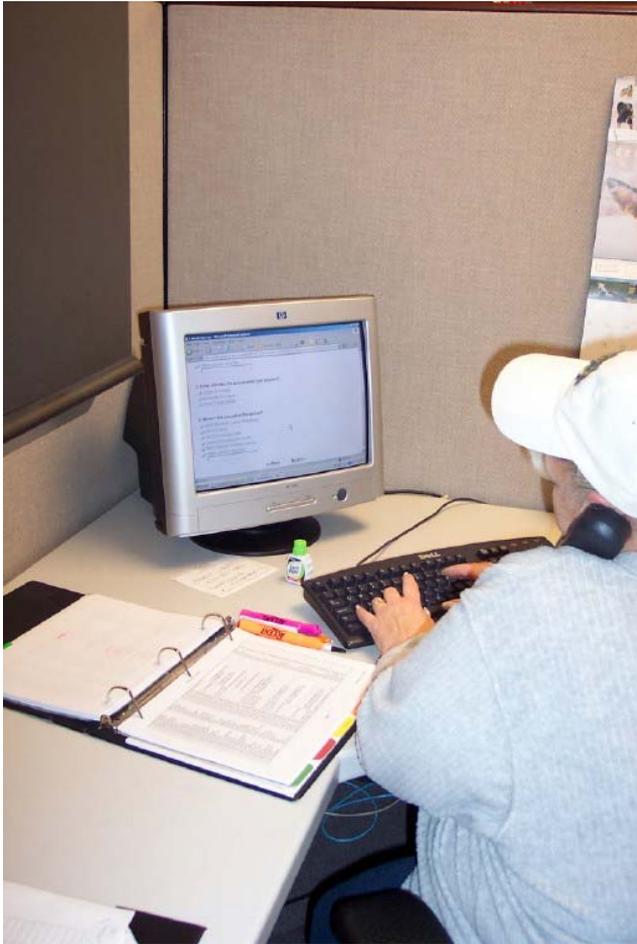
- Volunteer calls each adopter with no email address

- Thanks for adopting

- How are things are going?

- Asks for email

- Online survey

- Takes down problems for call-back resolution

- Mails coupon reward in a thank you note

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PS1	12361	Kjohnson	Ming	Hon	Daphne	Rabbit	Lop	222-222-2238	ming@hotmail.com		

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No One Home?

- The fact that you called or emailed has a positive effect on adopters

- More likely to contact you with problems

- Toll-free number left on answering machine

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Making It Work for Adopters

- Adopter Support" versus "Adopter Follow-up"

- Customer Service

- Provide Efficient Service with problems

- Integrate them into your organization

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Tracking Contacts by Volunteers

2015_ Adopter Support Contacts
Rochester

Adoption Week	2015 Rochester Summary																
	2015 Adoptions	No. Valid Email	No. Bad Email	% Email	Week Phone	% Contacted	Month Phone	New Email	% Contacted	2014 Week	2014 Adoptions	No. Valid Email	No. Bad Email	% Email	Year Phone	% Contacted
Jan-15	115	103	2	90%	9	97%	8	2	98%	Jan-14	96	75	4	78%	13	92%
Feb-15	85	76	1	89%	9	100%	8	2	101%	Feb-14	85	56	8	66%	19	88%
Mar-15	119	101	6	85%	14	97%	8	4	95%	Mar-14	73	62	4	85%	5	92%
Apr-15	113	123	8	109%	18	125%	0	3	0%	Apr-14	101	79	13	78%	17	95%
May-15	36	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0%	May-14	135	101	5	75%	5	79%
Jun-15	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0%	Jun-14	124	94	6	76%	0	0%
Jul-15	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0%	Jul-14	110	90	7	82%	0	0%
Aug-15	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0%	Aug-14	116	96	5	83%	0	0%
Sep-15	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0%	Sep-14	73	62	5	85%	0	0%
Oct-15	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0%	Oct-14	115	96	2	83%	0	0%
Nov-15	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0%	Nov-14	78	64	2	82%	0	0%
Dec-15	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0%	Dec-14	0	0	0	0%	0	0%
Total	468	403	17	86%	50	97%	24	11	94%		1,106	875	61	79%	59	84%

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Using Adopter Feedback

Limitations of the Surveys

Responses are not necessarily representative of all adopters

More online responses than phone surveys

Question interpretation:

- 99% of respondents still have their pets

- Doesn't mean 99% of all of your adopters still have their pets

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Check Surveys Daily

Can filter so that only people needing help are viewed

Can look at individual responses

Will have person's email address, name, and adoption location at top

- But not for phone surveys!

Check surveys every 24 hours on weekdays

Analysis is Done for You
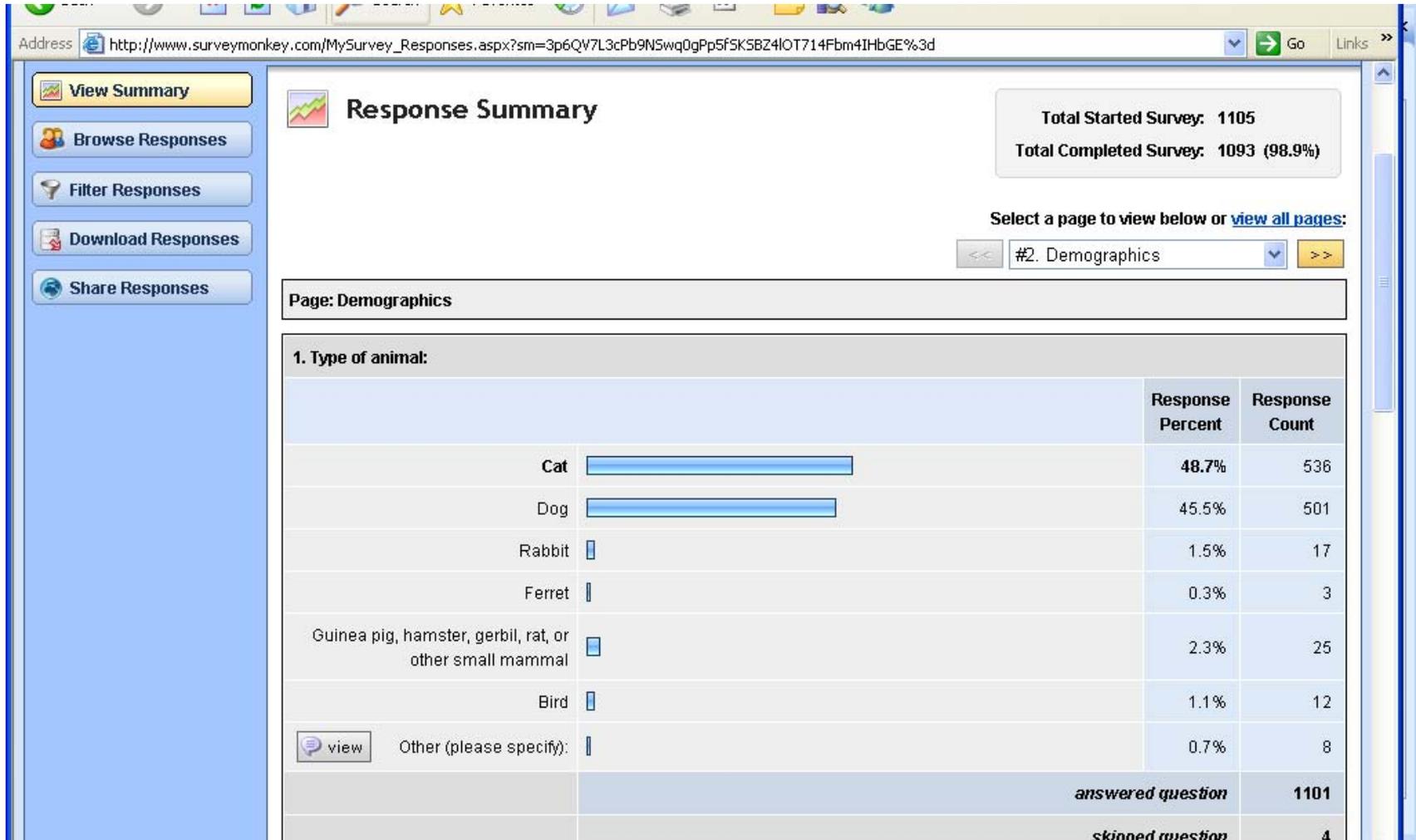
Using Filters

Filters are easy to set up

They make regular analysis possible

Easy for management to access and view

MHS filters:

- By location

- By species or breed adopted

- By time period

- By specific answers to individual questions

Advanced Analysis

Results can be exported in different formats:

- PDF for reports

- HTML for web pages

- CVS for spreadsheets

Results offer pre-made graphs and charts, and the ability to compare locations or species or months within a single question

Can save individual survey responses as PDF and attach to animal's record in software!

MHS Experience

- 2014: 96% of our adopters contacted at one week; 95% at one month; 90% at one year

- 79-83% email; rest by phone

- 23-26% response rate

- Hundreds of behavior and health questions answered

- Thousands of hits on Adopters Club website

- Clear identification of strengths and weaknesses in our customer service

- 40%+ previous adopters

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Goal Email Collection by Staff

80% is the 2015 goal for email collection at all three adoption centers:

Inconsistencies due to staff training, etc.

Email Collection 2007

Legend:
- Rochester
- Westland
- Detroit

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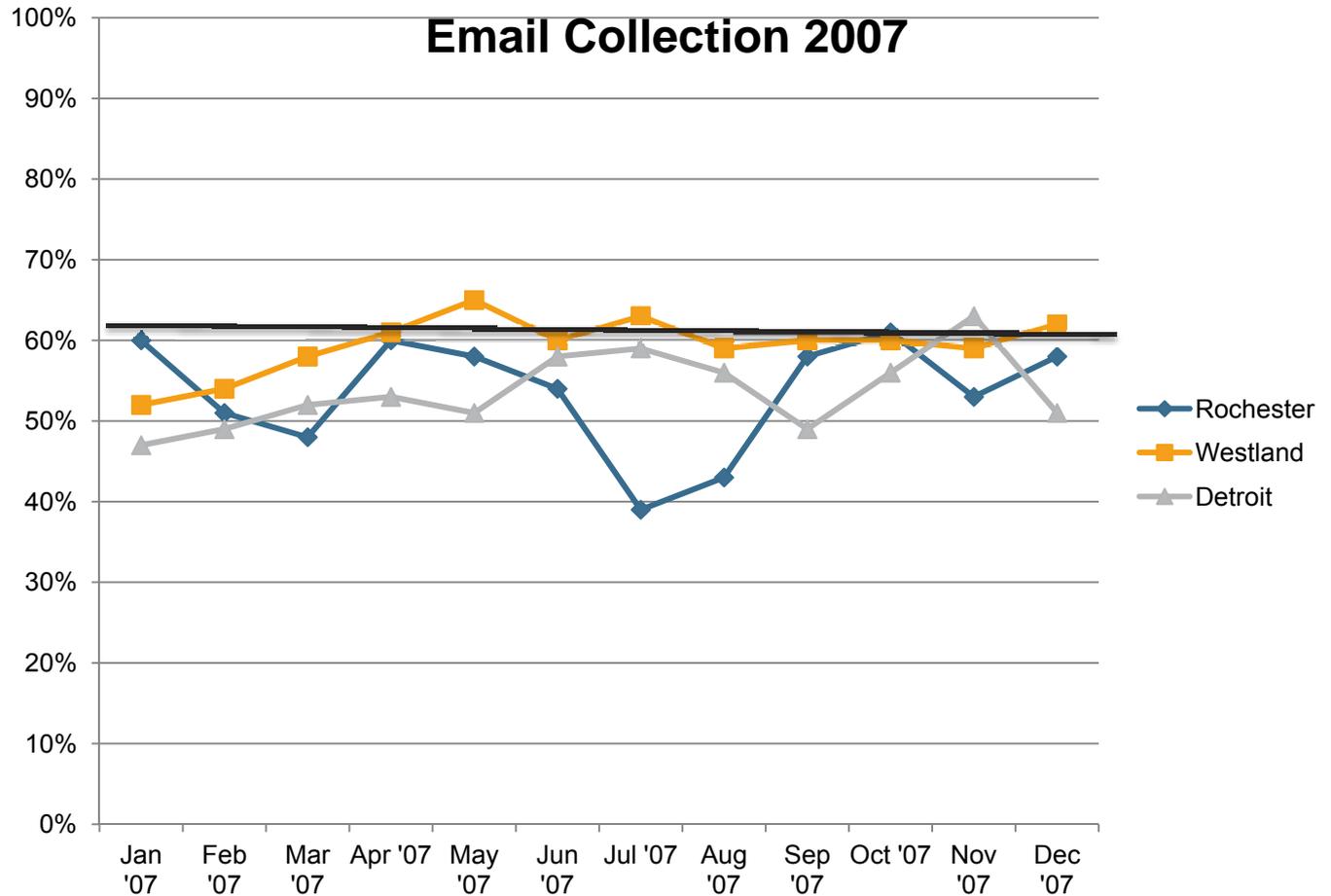
Animal Adjustment
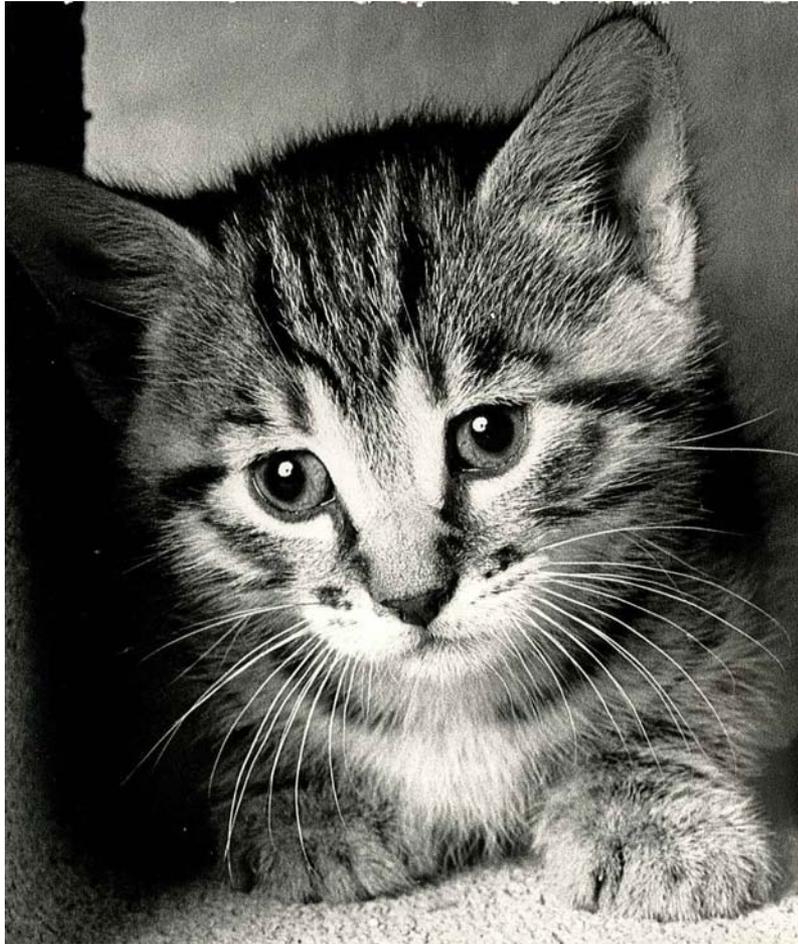
"Extremely Well"

- 75% 1 week

- 81% 1 month

- 92% 1 year

# Animal Health

No health problems:

- 77% 1 Week

No unresolved health problems

- 92% 1 Month

- 94% 1 Year

Main health problem reported at 1 week for dogs and cats was URI @ 61% of pets with problems

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Vet Visit for Pets
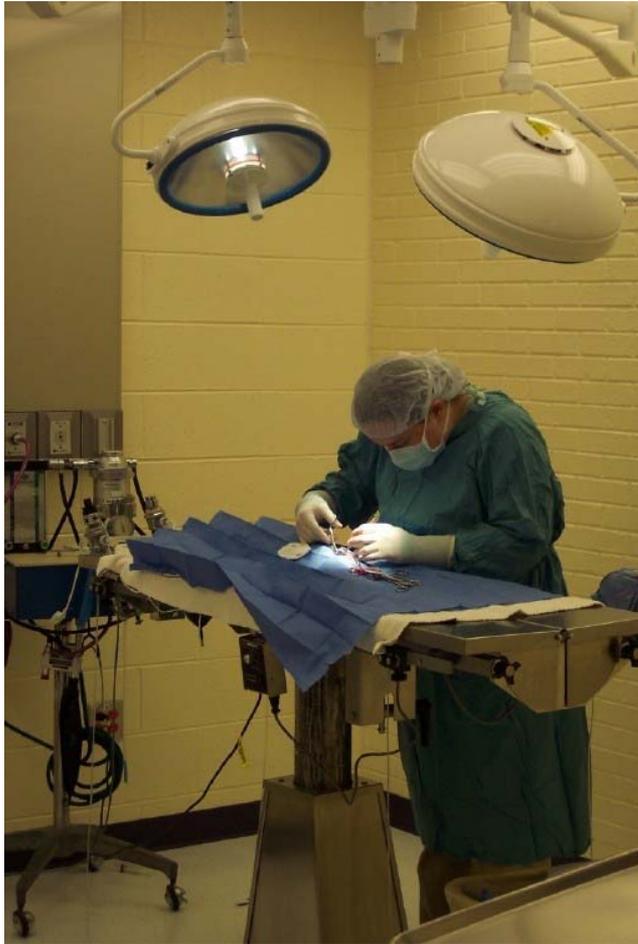
One Week:

- 62% of dog adopters

- 51% of cat adopters

One Month:

- 80% of dog adopters

- 67% of cat adopters

One Year:

- 17% of cat adopters and 7% of dog adopters still no vet contact

ASPCA®
ASPCApro.org

Behavior Problems

- No behavior problems

- 86% 1 Week

- No unresolved behavior problems:

- 80% 1 Month

- 84% 1 Year

- Dogs had 12-16% higher incidence of behavior problems than cats

Cat Behavior Problems

- **1 week:** aggression to humans (28%) and destructive behavior (25%)

- **1 month:** aggression to humans (29%) and high energy (29%)

- **1 year:** destructive behavior (28%) and aggression to humans (24%)

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Dog Behavior Problems

- **1 week:** housetraining (37%) and destructive behavior (33%)

- **1 month:** housetraining (41%) and destructive behavior (38%)

- **1 year:** destructive behavior (31%) and household manners (31%)

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ASPCApro.org

How satisfied were you with each of the following items during your animal adoption experience?

ASPCApro.org
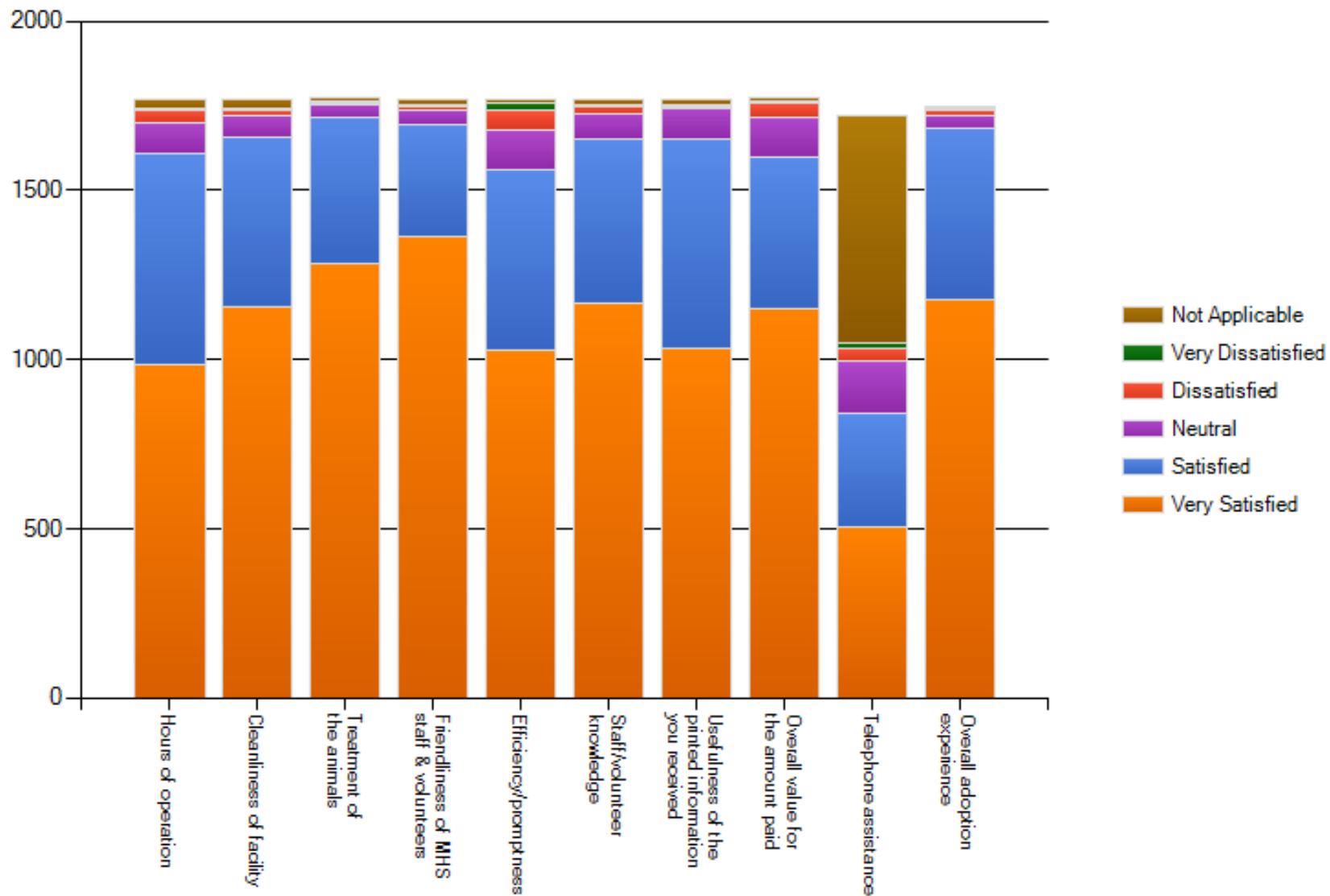
Overall Impression @ 1 Week

89% of respondents would *definitely* recommend MHS to others

10% would *probably* recommend MHS

Adopter Support—
They need it and you can do it!

This webinar is based on Chapter 16 of **Animal Behavior For Shelter Veterinarians And Staff**
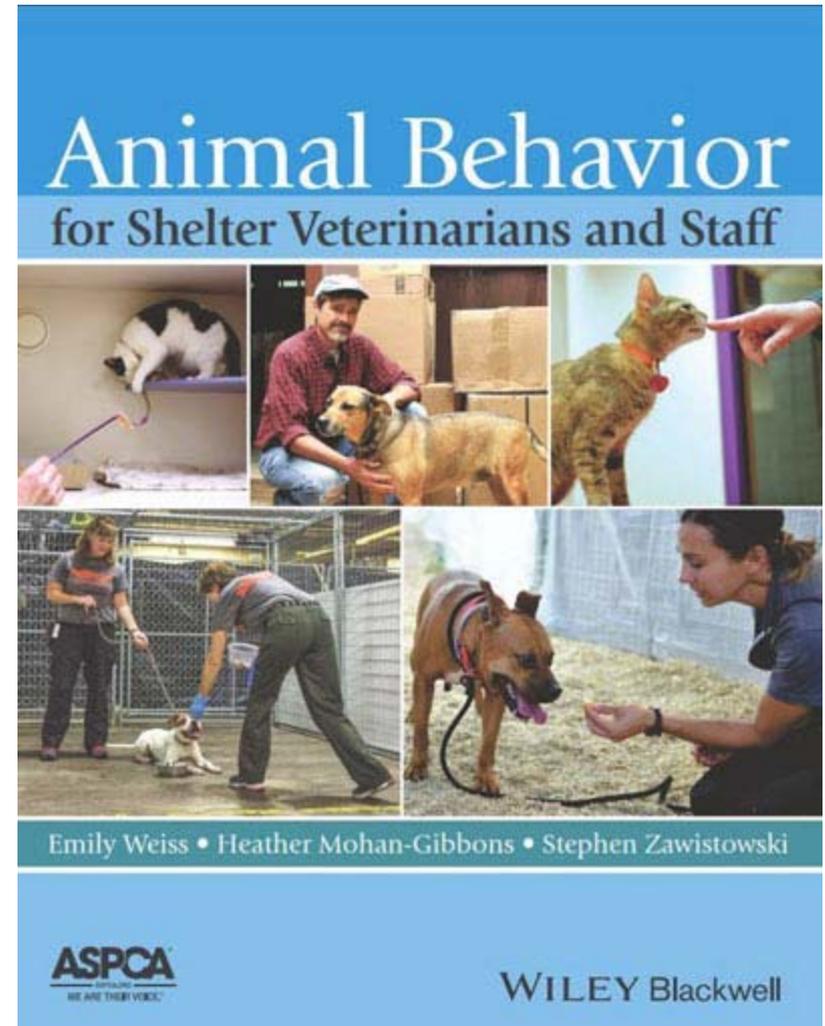
www.ASPCApro.org/animalbehavior

Animal Behavior
for Shelter Veterinarians and Staff

Emily Weiss • Heather Mohan-Gibbons • Stephen Zawistowski

ASPCA
WE ARE THEIR VOICE

WILEY Blackwell

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