



## **PETS - Alley Cat Ally talks about the controversy over no-kill communities and how much money it costs to become one**

**By Hanna Booth**

Many shelter employees will get their backs up when they hear the term “no-kill”.

It can be frustrating to have people removed from the realities of animal sheltering telling you to stop euthanizing shelter animals – as if this is something new on our radar. Every day, we strive to find alternatives to euthanizing the animals.

Being a shelter worker is an exceptionally tough job and most employees really are in it for the love and compassion of animals. Imagine the distress felt when the ultimate outcome for an animal you have cared for and loved is they won't find another home, especially after witnessing these animals being dumped at the shelter by irresponsible owners.

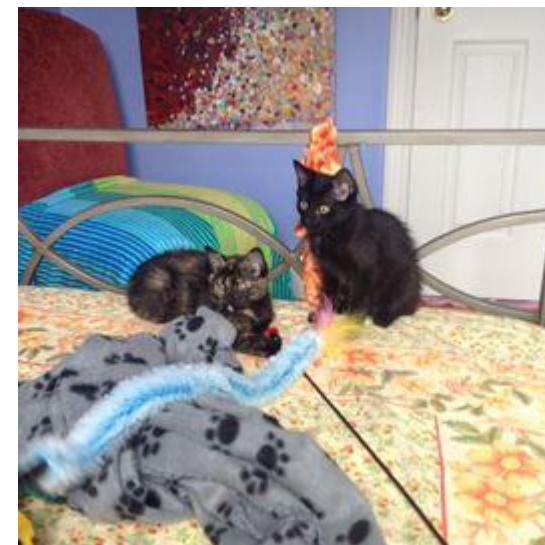
I think it goes without saying that we all want to find alternatives to euthanizing adoptable shelter animals. But an important point to keep in mind is this has to be done responsibly and with the animal's quality of life in mind.

Is it fair for animals to live for months and years in small cages with little enrichment or interactions?

The unfortunate fact is that, currently, the number of cats abandoned and breeding in our city is too proliferative to be able to say that tomorrow or next month, we could simply stop euthanizing all shelter cats.

It can be a dangerous situation when shelters or cities proclaim they are going “no-kill” without the appropriate resources and a measured strategic approach.

There are many case examples of shelters that have caused significant suffering and distress to their animals as a result of



*According to Kitty's foster mom, "this sweet kitten (tortoiseshell) is an absolute treasure. It may not be obvious at first glance, but this little one is a star cuddler and a happy little thing once she's confident in her surroundings."*

overcrowded shelters and the resulting infectious disease. I've witnessed this first hand at my first job as a shelter veterinarian and it is utterly despairing.

In fact, many cities and shelters have backed away from proclamations of going "no-kill" when they see the results of shelter overcrowding.

So what cities have done it right, and how are they making it happen?

It's not without significant resources that cities are able to make the gradual transition toward becoming no-kill. The key components in these strategies include a community coalition approach and funding for strong sterilization and adoption programs.

Many of these cities have received substantial funding grants from the Maddies Institute (<http://www.maddiesfund.org>) , which is designed to help build and sustain a no-kill nation so that shelter dogs and cats can be guaranteed a loving home.

Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, and Dane County, Wisconsin have received more than \$1.5 million to support programs to achieve their goals of becoming no-kill communities.

The entire state of Utah has proudly achieved their goal of "no more homeless pets" after receiving more than \$8 million in Maddies fund grants.

And New York City is on its way to becoming no-kill after receiving more than \$26 million over a seven-year grant period. This money assisted the funding of five mobile spay/neuter clinics operating daily throughout the poorest boroughs of New York, sterilizing more than 85,000 animals in the grant period.

San Francisco is perhaps one of the most successful example of no-kill. They currently have a live release rate of 98 per cent. Much of this success can be attributed to their street cat sterilization program. San Francisco has now decreased their shelter intake to the point that they are actually transporting cats into the city for adoption. (To read more about this, see October's blog (<http://www.insidetoronto.com/blogs/post/4150225-pets-san-francisco-helping-feral-cats-beyond-its-borders-thanks-to-embracing-shelter-neuter-return>).)

### **Website of the month**

<http://www.maddiesfund.org/> (<http://www.maddiesfund.org/>)

### **Colony Cat of the month**

Kitty and her two brothers were rescued from a cement factory after their mom died from being hit by a car. She lived outdoors for her first couple of months so before coming to the shelter, she spent a couple of weeks in foster care to help socialize and acclimatize her to indoor living.

### **Note from foster mom:**

This sweet kitten is an absolute treasure. It may not be obvious at first glance, but this little one is a star cuddler and a happy little thing once she's confident in her surroundings. She's sweet and bright – she just needs someone special to adopt her, someone kind and patient who is willing to give her extra care and understanding as she builds confidence.

She will be shy at first and may be fearful in new situations, but she's very sweet and gentle and once picked up she'll relax and start purring and happily snuggle on your lap.

She's 100 per cent excellent at using the litter box, she has a good appetite and she's fun and curious.

This kitten needs further socialization, but she's ready to bond with her special person. She would be ideal for someone who'd like a lap cat and who is willing to help kitty overcome her shyness and build confidence: a pleasure with this one, as she's so happy to be cuddled.

If you are interested in adopting this special kitten please email [jbooth@toronto.ca](mailto:jbooth@toronto.ca)

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Hanna Booth is a shelter veterinarian with a special interest in targeted spay/neuter programs to combat pet overpopulation. Booth and her husband spent a year spaying street animals in Central America; worked as a veterinarian at the Toronto Humane Society; now works for Toronto Animal Services; is a leading member of the Toronto Feral Cat TNR Coalition; and also runs a volunteer program [www.torontostreetcats.com](http://www.torontostreetcats.com). She lives in Roncesvalles with her husband, son, three former street cats and a revolving door of foster cats and kittens.