New England Animal Welfare Trends Assessment

Made possible by:

PET SMART Charities

With support from:

ASPCA

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition
What was asked?

What challenges are people experiencing in providing care for their pets?

What are the problems and needs veterinarians are seeing with people and pets?

What issues are human service organizations seeing relative to people and their animals?

What do people think of:
  • Animal welfare issues
  • Shelters
  • Common messages

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition, 2020
What do you think are the two biggest problems for dogs and cats in your community?
(responses indicate % of people who selected the problem as one of their top 2)

- Animal shelters euthanizing dogs and cats: 12%
- Lack of adequate pet care option such as boarding, training, etc.: 7%
- Lack of accessible veterinary care nearby: 6%
- People not being able to afford vet care: 43%
- People purchasing pets from puppy mills or irresponsible breeders: 24%
- People abusing or being cruel to cats and dogs: 45%
- Aggressive dogs: 10%
- Stray or feral cats: 32%

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition, 2020
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- Animal shelters euthanizing dogs and cats: 12% (Animal Welfare Orgs), 0% (Regional)
- Lack of adequate pet care options such as boarding, training, etc: 7% (Animal Welfare Orgs), 9% (Regional)
- Lack of accessible veterinary care nearby: 6% (Animal Welfare Orgs), 34% (Regional)
- People not being able to afford vet care: 43% (Animal Welfare Orgs), 91% (Regional)
- People purchasing pets from puppy mills or irresponsible breeders: 24% (Animal Welfare Orgs), 11% (Regional)
- People abusing or being cruel to cats and dogs: 45% (Animal Welfare Orgs), 2% (Regional)
- Aggressive dogs: 23% (Animal Welfare Orgs), 10% (Regional)
- Stray or feral cats: 32% (Animal Welfare Orgs), 30% (Regional)

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition, 2020
Perception of Abuse as a Problem

Are you more likely to agree that abuse is an issue if you...

- Live in a certain state?
- Identify as a certain gender?
- Are a particular age?
- Have a particular level of education?
- Have more household income?

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition, 2020
Everyone should be able to own a pet regardless of how much money they have.

People should not own a pet if they cannot afford their pet’s care.
Any **dog**, regardless of health or behavior problems, can make a good pet with the right family.

Any **cat**, regardless of health or behavior problems, can make a good pet with the right family.
How much do you agree with the following statements about animal shelters?

It is OK for animal shelters to use humane euthanasia for animals who have:

- An injury or illness that can’t be treated.
- Behavioral issues that aren’t dangerous but make the pet very difficult to adopt.
How much do you agree with the following statements about animal shelters?

It is OK for animal shelters to use humane euthanasia for animals who have:

**Behavioral issues, like biting, fighting, etc., that are dangerous to people.**

**Behavioral issues, like biting, fighting, etc., that are dangerous to other animals.**

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition, 2020
Agreeability with: I trust animal shelters to make good decisions about when euthanasia is necessary.
In the last five years have you experienced challenges providing veterinary care for your dog/cat?

Access to Care

Preventative: 36% Yes, 57% No, 7% N/A

Sick: 31% Yes, 60% No, 9% N/A

Emergency: 43% Yes, 48% No, 9% N/A

(wellness/vaccines/annual) (non-emergency, illness/sick care) (urgent/immediate need)
What challenges have you experienced when accessing veterinary care in the last 5 years (regional)

- Too far away: Preventative 73, Sick 52, Emergency 62
- Too expensive: Preventative 583, Sick 454, Emergency 448
- Did not have transportation: Preventative 84, Sick 57, Emergency 53
- Did not know where to get care: Preventative 81, Sick 48, Emergency 59
- Pet too challenging: Preventative 92, Sick 68, Emergency 51
- Other: Preventative 99, Sick 88, Emergency 95

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition, 2020
How much of a problem do you believe underserved populations of pets are in your area?

- Not at all a problem: 15.6%
- A minor problem: 46.9%
- Moderate problem: 32.3%
- Serious problem: 17.6%
- Not sure: 21.6%
- Prefer not to answer: 6.9%

How often are your clients unable to afford the care you prescribe or recommend?

- Never: 17.6%
- Rarely (a handful of times per year): 6.9%
- Moderately (a few times each month): 21.6%
- Frequently (several times each week): 52.9%
- Daily: 32.3%
What types of care do your clients most often decline due to financial hardship?

- Preventative/Wellness: 17.7%
- Sick Care: 32.3%
- Emergency Care: 36.5%
- Other: 10.4%
To the best of your knowledge, when a client does not follow the care you prescribe or recommend, how often do you believe these are the likely reasons?

Veterinarians
Patient Access to Care
What do you think are the two biggest problems for dogs and cats in your community?
(responses indicate % of people who selected the problem as one of their top 2)

- Stray or feral cats: 32%, 9%
- Aggressive dogs: 10%, 9%
- People abusing or being cruel to cats and dogs: 45%, 1%
- People purchasing cats from puppy mills or irresponsible breeders: 24%, 30%
- People not being able to afford vet care: 56%, 43%
- Lack of accessible veterinary care nearby: 6%, 6%
- Lack of adequate pet care option such as boarding, training, etc.: 7%, 3%
- Animal shelters euthanizing dogs and cats: 12%, 1%

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition, 2020
Survey takers were then asked to read each of these animal welfare-related messages and choose one option for how each message makes them feel…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message</th>
<th>% of respondents who had seen it before (regional)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Spay and Neuter Your Pet</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  No Kill Shelter</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Forever Home</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Adopt Don’t Shop</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Kill Shelter</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Save Them All</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feelings About Messages
Public Reactions

PUBLIC Feelings about Various Common Messages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Love</th>
<th>Like</th>
<th>Annoyed</th>
<th>Dislike</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forever Home</td>
<td>1378</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt Don't Shop</td>
<td>1164</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>103</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Kill Shelter</td>
<td>1170</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save Them All</td>
<td>1063</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spay and Neuter Your Pet</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition, 2020
Are those who like/love messages more likely to trust shelters to make euthanasia decisions?

- Forever Home – no
- Adopt Don’t Shop – no
- Spay and Neuter Your Pet – no

- No-Kill Shelter – significant (p<0.001)
  People that like this are less likely to trust shelters to make euthanasia decisions

- Save them All – significant (p=0.009)
  People that like this are less likely to trust shelters to make euthanasia decisions
How did we get here?

82% of people in New England recognize this message

81% of people in New England have a positive response

A spay/neuter success story...

80% Cats in U.S. households are S/N¹

73% Dogs in U.S. households are S/N²

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition, 2020
1970s
We had a serious problem...

- Over 90% of animals in shelters were euthanized
- Roaming and stray animals were a serious concern
- Shelters didn’t want to spend most time and money euthanizing

“Pet Overpopulation Crisis” became a national issue

Sterilization became the standard of pet ownership
Low-cost sterilization clinics became more common
Licensing begins including lower cost option for sterilized pets
Private veterinarians increased number of spay/neuter surgeries
Private veterinarians increased number of spay/neuter surgeries

Messaging through the years

Help control the pet population. Have your pets spayed or neutered.

— Bob Barker —

5 million pets are killed in shelters across the United States each year.
Different Kinds of Messages

Advantages for the pet owner

- Why Spay and Neuter?
  - Reduce spraying & marking
  - Reduce aggression
  - Reduce roaming
  - Lower risk of cancers
  - Decrease overpopulation
  - Increase lifespan up to 3-5 years

Spaying or Neutering will not necessarily cause weight gain

Spaying or Neutering can decrease your pet’s desire to roam

Saving lives, helping animals

- Spay/Neuter it stops killing!
  - International Society for Animal Rights
  - Low cost spay/neuter

- Caused by pet overpopulation
  - Fix it at spayneutercoupon.org

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition, 2020
Today...
New England Dog Intake

- Adult
- Under 5 Months
- Unknown

National Cat Intake

- **Adult**
- **Under 5 Months**
- **Unknown**

New England Cat Intake

Dog RTO Rate

Data source: 1,049 organizations with 2017 - 2020 data in The National Database as of 11/23/20
New Hampshire Federation of Humane Organizations (NHFHO)
Shelter Dog Intake, Including Transfers

Transport discussion began
First Intrastrand Transport
First Interstate Transfer with Indiana
Transfers with several states Puerto Rico
Indiana no longer needs to transfer out of state

Dog Intake  Transfer in  Local dogs

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition, 2020
To model supply over time, we need to calculate a couple more factors. The most important is the rate of intake decline in the population.

In order to this, we need to estimate the birth rate in the community.

**Definition:** Puppy Intake Ratio (PIR) is the number of puppies coming in from the community divided by the total number of dogs coming in from the community (Community Intake)
Public Feelings About Buying vs Adopting

It doesn’t matter if you buy or adopt a **dog**, either is fine.

Sample Sizes

- CT = 419
- MA = 499
- ME = 422
- NH = 402
- RI = 387
- VT = 398

![Bar chart showing public feelings about buying vs adopting a dog.](chart)

- Disagree: 32%
- Neutral: 21%
- Agree: 46%

It doesn’t matter if you buy or adopt a **cat**, either is fine.

- Disagree: 33%
- Neutral: 22%
- Agree: 45%

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition, 2020
Public Feelings About Buying vs Adopting

If a friend or family member purchased a dog or cat from a **breeder**, I would think less of them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Prefer not to respond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>ME</td>
<td>NH</td>
<td>RI</td>
<td>VT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

62% Disagree, 23% Neutral, 14% Agree

If a friend or family member purchased a dog or cat from a **pet shop**, I would think less of them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Prefer not to respond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>CT</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53% Disagree, 25% Neutral, 22% Agree

Sample Sizes

- CT = 419
- MA = 499
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- VT = 398
Where did you get your dogs/cats (that you’ve acquired in the last five years)? Check all that apply.
Human Service Agencies
Needs & Support

“Do you think the people you serve are experiencing a lack of any of the following?”
(choose all that apply)

How Often People Report Needing Support with a Pet (% of respondents)

- 30% All the time
- 46% Occasionally, such as once per month

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition, 2020
“Why do you think they cannot access these pet services?”

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition, 2020
Has your org partnered with any other orgs or people that provide pet and animal services?

- **49%** Current animal organizations start a new program
- **38%** My org partners with an animal-focused org
- **28%** New organization is created to support them
- **9%** None of the above
- **3%** My org starts a new program or service

Actions your organizations takes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Currently takes</th>
<th>Wishes they could take more often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide supplies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refer to another pet-oriented nonprofit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refer to a vet clinic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help find a permanent home for pet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help find temporary housing for their pet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help find housing where they can stay with their pet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide financial assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition, 2020
Key Points

The public thinks very differently about animal welfare issues than shelter professional and veterinarians.

Access to and affordability of veterinary care is a very significant issue in New England.

Messaging works, but takes decades to become integrated. Current messaging is at odds with what is actually happening.

Human service organizations recognize the bond between people and their animals and can help us reach more in need.

New England Future of Animal Welfare Coalition, 2020
Special Thanks To:

**NE Futures Coalition Members:**

Carmine DiCenso, Dakin Humane Society, MA  
Abigail Smith, Animal Welfare Society, ME  
Lisa Dennison, New Hampshire SPCA, NH  
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Brad Shear, Potter League for Animals, RI  
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Pamela Krausz, VT-CAN, VT  
Annie Guion, Windham County Humane Society, VT  
Lisa Kaufmann, All Dog Rescue, MA  
Katie Lisnik, Greater Androscoggin Humane Society, ME

**Shelter Animal Count**

Dr. Roger Haston,  
The Institute for Animals

PetSmart Charities  
The ASPCA  
New England Federation of Humane Societies

**Impact by Design** provided overall project management, research expertise, and facilitation for this assessment.  
www.impactbydesigninc.org
Assessment Methods

CLICK HERE for detailed assessment methods