

The Importance of Standardized Shelter Data in Animal Welfare: Regional Initiatives

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Importance of standardization

- Understanding
 - E.g., the reasons behind owner relinquishment
- Identification
 - E.g., Identifying areas where interventions could be put into place
- Implementation
 - E.g., implementing interventions that have shown to work
- Resources
 - E.g., determining where to allocate resources

Our story...



Nestlé Purina PetCare Canada Chair in Communications

Pet relinquishment

Pet overpopulation

Positive pet behaviour

A systematic review and meta-analysis of the proportion of dogs surrendered for dog-related and owner-related reasons



Systematic review

Objective:

- Establish an overall estimate of the proportion of dogs surrendered by reason for relinquishment
- Look at the amount and sources of variation in the estimates across relinquishment studies

Systematic review

115 primary research articles on companion-animal relinquishment identified

- Through review process: 18 included in the study

Relinquishment studies results:

- Over half done in U.S.
- Over half in a shelter setting
- Most used questionnaires for data collection
- Most did NOT report the # of reasons given per dog

Systematic review

- **Large variation** in study methods = **large variation** in findings across studies
 - Differences in questionnaire format (e.g., open-ended vs. forced-choice questions)
 - Varied ways of reporting reasons or not reported

Systematic review

Study conclusion:

**Impossible to compare or combine results
because studies are conducted very differently**

Systematic review

Study conclusion:

Impossible to compare or combine results
because studies are conducted very differently

**Efforts towards standardized approaches to
collecting these data by shelters and
researchers needed**

Ontario Shelter Data Working Group

OMAFRA, CFHS, OSPCA, AASAO, Ottawa HS, Guelph HS, Oakville & Milton HS, Toronto Animal Services, Mississauga Animal Services, Brampton Animal Services, Animal Care Program - School of Interdisciplinary Studies & Employment Services (Whitby Campus), Animal Shelter Town of Georgina, Pethealth Inc., Ontario Veterinary College



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First meeting

- Identified areas needing standardized data collection
- Identified obstacles to standardizing
 - Established obstacle severity

Two biggest obstacles:

Staff training and standardized definitions

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Second meeting:

- How to begin standardization process?
 - Looked at common definitions
 - Identified commonly used resources
- Determined minimum database

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Third meeting

- Collated resources for definitions
 - Basic Animal Data Matrix
- ‘Live intake’ definitions
- How to engage stakeholders
 - Best practices for record keeping
 - Incentives
 - Engage stakeholders nationwide

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Fourth meeting

- Continued to revise and agree on definitions for 'live intake', 'live outcomes', and 'other outcomes'
- Continued discussion on engaging stakeholders

Conclusions

- Difference in data collection formats impacts our understanding
- Need for standardization of data collection
- Standardized shelter data and data collection will help us move FORWARD
- Standardized shelter data will assist with measuring the impact of interventions