

What no-kill really means

No-kill, as a philosophical principle, means saving every dog or cat in a shelter who can be saved. But it's helpful to have a way to clearly measure lifesaving progress as we move forward together, and that's where the 90% benchmark comes in.

A 90% save rate for animals entering a shelter is a meaningful and common-sense benchmark for measuring lifesaving progress. Typically, the number of pets who are suffering from irreparable medical or behavioral issues that compromise their quality of life and prevent them from being rehomed is not more than 10% of all dogs and cats entering shelters. Therefore, we designate shelters that meet the 90% save-rate benchmark as no-kill.

What it means to be a no-kill animal shelter

While the 90% benchmark offers a meaningful, consistent way to gauge progress, it is neither a floor nor a ceiling. For many shelters, a true no-kill save rate may be closer to 95% (or higher). For some shelters, particularly those offering care and services such as neonatal kitten programs or compassionate end-of-life services for residents with pets in underresourced communities, the no-kill benchmark may be slightly below 90%.

The goal is for every shelter, no matter what type of shelter it is, to make a clear commitment to lifesaving and transparency while working to achieve and sustain no-kill in philosophy and practice, rather than simply working to obtain a no-kill designation.

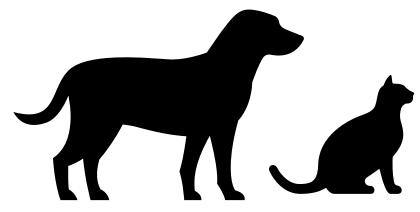
Source: https://bestfriends.org/no-kill-2025/what-does-no-kill-mean

The Old Way

The lack of access to affordable veterinary care inevitability leads to pet overpopulation.



Unsterilized and unvaccinated pets reproduce all year round while remaining vectors for disease.



Animal Control call volume remains unmanageable year after year.

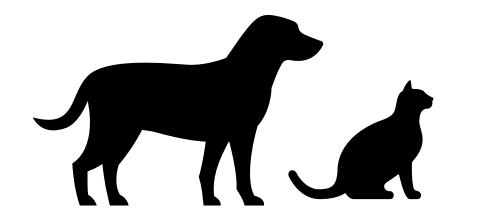




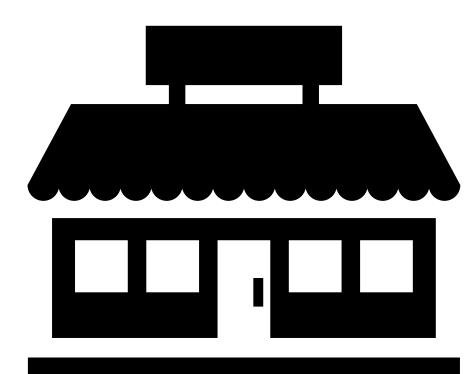
The lucky few animals who make it out of the shelter are not sterilized or vaccinated.



Taxpayer-Funded PROBLEM



Vast majority of animals killed in shelter due to overcrowding and constant intake.

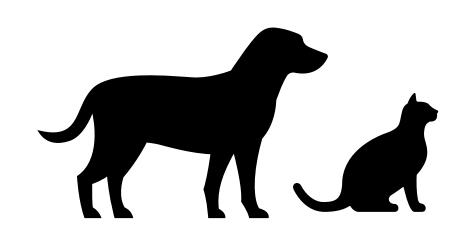


Strays get picked up by animal control and brought to animal shelter.

The Right Way

Stray population steadily decreases.

Increased public access to
basic veterinary care
(RGVHS low-cost spay/neuter and vaccine clinics)
ensures a safer community
and a decreased stray population.

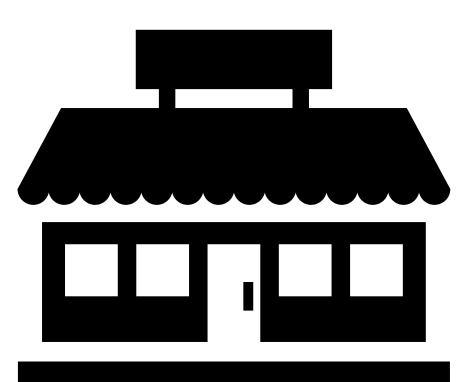




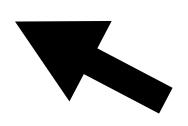
Animal Control call volume gradually decreases due to fewer strays and proactive community-based shelter programs (foster, etc).

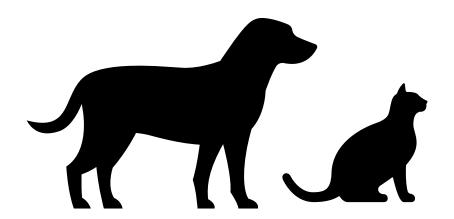


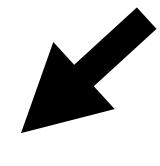
Taxpayer-Funded SOLUTION



Animals adopted from shelter go home vaccinated and sterilized.







The animals that need to be brought to the shelter are vaccinated upon arrival and are then scheduled for spay/neuter.

Vast majority of animals find live outcomes through adoption/foster/rescue. Euthanasia reserved solely for when it is absolutely necessary.

Rio Grande Valley Humane Society's Vision:

The Rio Grande Valley Humane Society (RGVHS) is the leader for animal welfare in the Rio Grande Valley. For 3 years, RGVHS has kept Harlingen a no-kill city. In February 2023, The City of Mission partnered with RGVHS to bring the no-kill movement to Hidalgo County.

Stray animal overpopulation is a regional problem that requires a regional approach. RGVHS seeks to expand our reach and make the entire Rio Grande Valley a safer place for pets.

