indyhumane

IndyHumane's Statement on "No Kill"

IndyHumane continues our long history as a safe and humane organization devoted to animal welfare. Today, words matter more than ever; and there has been some confusion around the term "No Kill." Some ask whether or not we are a "No Kill" shelter. It's an important topic that doesn't lend itself well to a sound bite, but instead deserves a thorough understanding. So, we've put together the following:

IndyHumane qualifies as a "No Kill" shelter, but we choose not to use that language. Why?

It's Misunderstood

Organizations who use the term are maintaining a euthanasia rate of less than 10%. In short: "No Kill" doesn't actually mean no-kill, so why use it?

It's Unkind

Reputable agencies are doing their best for animals. Some are "open admission" and/or serve communities that are overrun. These areas may be facing an overwhelming need and short on adequate shelters, staff, or community support. The "No Kill" term vilifies, rather than supports them. Those groups need our support and community funding to help them improve their outcomes and increase their lifesaving abilities.

It's Misleading

There is no governing body over the "No Kill" term that monitors agencies. There was only an organic consensus among agencies that eventually developed into today's 10% criterion. But even that isn't consistent from organization to organization because there's a variety of ways organizations report and look at their own data to reach that marker. The designation also doesn't account for all the other ways they're caring for animals.

It's Divisive

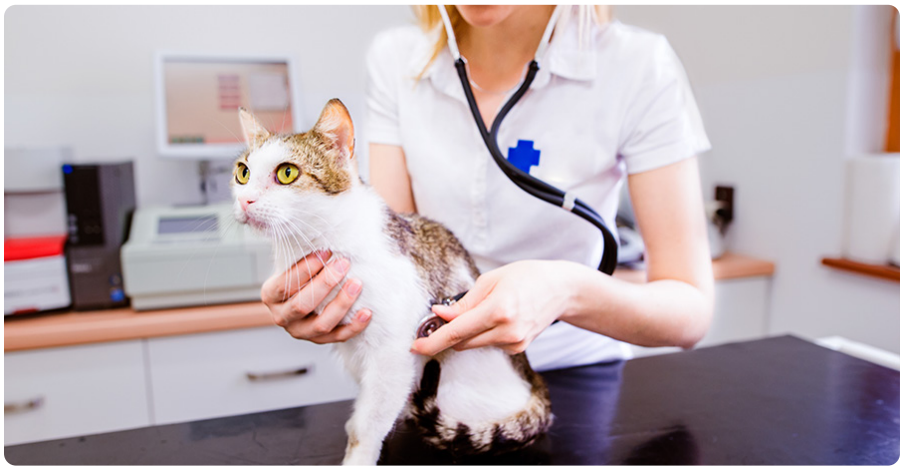
Animal welfare is a community issue. It takes all of us to pull together to care for animals in a responsible way. We choose to work with our partners, not against them.

Since 2015, IndyHumane has had a save rate of more than 90%, and we intend to stay there. But we prefer the term "safe and humane," because we are a safe, humane organization working with our partners to support a safe, humane community where all animals can receive the compassionate individual care they need.

The Origin of "No Kill"

In the 80s, there were an overwhelming number of animals being euthanized nationally. Historically, the general public had preferred breeders as the only desirable place to obtain animals. So, over the next couple of decades, the "No Kill" campaign attempted to change these perceptions. Shelters were cast as reliable and compassionate alternatives to breeders. And greater funding was given to agencies and staff. In many ways, it was a success. Animal adoption numbers quadrupled over the last few years.

The problem is, the term "No Kill" has now become weaponized. It is used to divide organizations into categories of either "good" or "bad." And so much of that relies on misunderstandings and misconceptions of how the industry actually functions.



"No Kill" Shelters Still Euthanize

No one who works in animal welfare wants to see animals euthanized. But the sad reality is, for some animals with insurmountable behavioral or medical issues, the most compassionate thing to do is to humanely euthanize them. To do otherwise prolongs their suffering and puts people or other animals in danger. We believe that quality of life and the safety of the community are important factors to consider. We do not wish to sustain a cruel existence for the animal, perpetuating its suffering. Currently, for a facility to use the term "No Kill," it simply means they are keeping their euthanizing rate at 10% or lower.

One Number Doesn't Tell the Whole Story

Every day, organizations' staff and volunteers work toward animal welfare on dozens of different fronts. For example, today's efforts to promote low-cost, accessible spay and neuter surgeries are cutting down on tomorrow's pet overpopulation. And resources offered to families so that they can continue to successfully care for their pets means those pets won't arrive at a shelter in the future.

And the geographic placement of a shelter can greatly affect the number of animals it serves. One agency might save 1000 animals a year and maintain their "No Kill" percentage, while another saving 20,000 cannot. The latter is disparaged as a "kill shelter" even though it saved 20x as many animals.

There are also different types of shelters. Some are "Limited Admission" meaning they accept only selected animals that they feel maximize their organization's strengths. These might be highly adoptable animals they can re-home quickly, leading them to move animals through faster, often from overcrowded shelters. Whereas other organizations are "Open Admission," meaning they take any animal in need. Often, these are municipal animal control agencies that are often taking on elderly, ill, aggressive, or injured animals. Therefore, they are at a huge disadvantage in their ability to maintain a high re-homing percentage. The stigma surrounding "No Kill" means that oftentimes the organizations that need the most support are the ones left without it.

Our Numbers

Though it isn't the only metric, thanks to the hard work of our staff and volunteers over these past few years, we have kept a "Save Rate" above 90% since 2015. **Here's the data:**

IndyHumane Euthanization Data 2015-2023 YTD

Year	Total behavior euthanasia	Total medical euthanasia	Intake	Total euth	Total outcome minus euthanasia	Total outcome	Save rate*	Overall euth rate	Medical euth as a % of overall euth	Behavior euth as a % of overall euth
2015	42	324	3746	366	3380	4149	90.2%	9.8%	88.5%	11%
2016	38	314	4149	352	3797	4115	91.5%	8.5%	89.2%	11%
2017	28	168	3884	196	3688	3901	95%	5%	85.7%	14%
2018	38	131	4086	169	3917	4026	95.9%	4.1%	77.5%	22%
2019	34	174	4497	208	4289	4506	95.4%	4.6%	83.7%	16%
2020	12	88	3482	100	3382	3563	97.1%	2.9%	88%	12%
2021	8	102	3680	110	3570	3670	97%	3%	92.7%	7%
2022	13	149	4478	162	4316	4312	96.4%	3.6%	92%	8%
2023 (1/1 - 6/30)	7	65	1809	72	1721	1793	96%	4%	86%	9.7%

**Intake minus euth outcome divided by intake*

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IndyHumane Supports and Honors Our Partners

We recognize that animal welfare is a community responsibility, and none of us can solve these problems alone. So, it's vital that we strive together with our partners, rather than disparaging them. It takes all kinds of organizations - private and public - paid and volunteer - to continue the work. We are grateful for all our partners, whether limited or open admission and recognize that each plays an important role.

For the sake of this unity, we will continue to refuse the "No Kill" language and instead focus on continuing to play our part and support our partner organizations wherever they may be on their journey.