

## Happy Anniversary Redemption!

From [www.nokillblog.com](http://www.nokillblog.com) (September 1, 2008)

September 1, 2008 marks the one year anniversary of the release of *Redemption: The Myth of Pet Overpopulation and the No Kill Revolution in America*. Over the last year, the book climbed to the top 500 at Barnes & Noble and cracked the top 1,000 (out of 2 million) at Amazon. For its first six months, it was the Number 1 animal rights book in America. We sold tens of thousands of copies and received lots of press coverage. On sheltering issues, I have become the third most cited person in the U.S. by the media on the topic—and without a million dollar P.R. machine!

*Redemption* won a Silver Medal for the Best Book (Animals/Pets) of 2008 by the Independent Publishers Association. And was a Best Book nominee by the Dog Writers Association of America. *Midwest Book Reviews* called it “a passionate advocacy for ending the killing of homeless dogs and cats in shelters.” *Animal People* called it “[T]he most provocative and best-informed overview of animal sheltering ever written.” *The Bark* said it was an “important work... The world owes much to those rare individuals who see things differently—and who then devote themselves to vindicating their maverick conclusions.”

The book has also been favorably reviewed by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Sacramento Bee*, *Pet Connection*, and others. But that doesn't tell the whole story. Endorsements have also come from dog lovers, cat lovers, rabbit lovers, and others who were moved by it and either bought copies of the book to give to their local shelter directors and city council members or have blogged about it in order to help spread the word that we *can* build a brighter world for animals.

And while not everyone has been enthusiastic, this is just further proof that *Redemption* is having an impact. The book, for example, has raised the ire of PETA, who has gone so far as to take out a “sponsored link” condemning it—and me—on Google. Never mind the factory farms or unnecessary cosmetic testers. Never mind the hunters or the abusers. PETA is spending donor funds to attack a person—and a vegan no less!—who is working to end the killing of animals and instead get them adopted into loving, new homes.

There is an old saying: “follow the money.” In this case, the more apt saying is “follow the sodium pentobarbital,” the drug used to kill animals in shelters. Where there is a lot of usage of this lethal poison, you can expect a negative review. That is why it is not surprising that groups like PETA did not like the book. Not only was the book highly critical of PETA's pro-kill policy towards shelter animals, especially feral cats and Pit Bulls, but PETA killed over 90% of all dogs and cats at its “shelter” last year and was the subject of a petition to the Virginia Department of Agriculture seeking to reclassify PETA as a “slaughterhouse.” PETA, in short, uses a lot of sodium pentobarbital.

But those who drink the Ingrid Newkirk Kool-Aid aside, the public has overwhelmingly and enthusiastically embraced the book and the message. One year ago, I started a 28-city national book tour. We packed the house from coast to coast. And the momentum never slowed down. In Tucson, AZ, the official close of the book tour, over 500 registered to attend.

The book has not only helped shift the national debate about killing, but also played a direct role in helping to transform communities. A shelter director in Ohio wrote this:

I spent almost a year as the director of the local so called “humane” society... I came into a high kill shelter and in one month stopped all the killing of dogs and ran a no kill for space county shelter (taking all the stray dogs)... Reading *Redemption* has brought me an understanding of the situation, the magnitude of the situation and the conviction to move forward.

A rescuer in Washington reported this from the shelter manager she gave a copy of *Redemption*:

She just called to say that [she] has read the book and has had a 180 degree turn around. She told [us] that she now sees they have all been brain washed. The book is going to make the rounds of the staff. The personal goal of the manager is no dogs [killed] due to space this year.

After reading *Redemption*, Porter County (Indiana) commissioners and advocates succeeded in getting the 20-year shelter director of the county's animal control shelter in Valparaiso and almost all of the staff removed from their positions. What was once a shelter that killed the vast majority of dogs and cats, sold live animals to a research facility on the side, and even cruelly killed the animals has been No Kill since a new team took over. During a recent visit, dogs were playing outside, were being walked by volunteers, kittens were being bottle fed, adopters were coming through the shelter in droves, the place was clean, and the animals had enrichment items to play with and soft blankets to sleep on.

As *Redemption* celebrates its first anniversary, Tompkins County enters its seventh No Kill year, Charlottesville enters its third, and new communities like those in Reno, NV and Valparaiso, IN enter the No Kill club. Other communities—in Montana, Michigan, and elsewhere—have also embraced No Kill, and many others are aggressively moving in that direction. No Kill is on the agenda of local governments nationwide as advocates in communities as diverse as King County (Seattle), WA and Indianapolis, IN are using *Redemption* and the model it advocates to force changes in the practices of local shelters.

There have been other notable changes. The Humane Society of the United States' favorite misnomer "euthanasia" has lost its cache. People are no longer hiding behind it and other HSUS euphemisms ("putting them to sleep") to describe the abhorrent practice of shelter killing. People are more aware of widespread mistreatment of animals in shelters. And they are less tolerant of both the poor care and the killing, the excuses built up over the decades to justify it, and the legitimacy groups like HSUS give to it. In fact, even the large national groups are on the defensive, trying to take credit for the decline in killing nationally (even as they opposed and in some cases continue to oppose the programs responsible for it) and by softening their anti-No Kill positions.

*Redemption* debunked the myth of pet overpopulation and put the blame for the killing where it belongs: on the shoulders of the very shelter directors who find killing easier than doing what is necessary to stop it, on the local governments who continue to underfund their shelters or place them under the regressive oversight of health and police departments (and even under sanitation!), and on the unions and managers who would rather protect lazy, uncaring and even cruel members at the expense of the animals.

More than all of that, average people are now aware that shelters kill. And they are aware that there are some shelters (and communities) which do not kill. And as one advocate in Los Angeles told me: "At least now we know what—or more accurately, who—the problem is." We also know how to make them stop. In short, we know the real reasons they are killing. We know how to stop the killing. And in more communities nationwide, we have.

But there is still much work to be done and too many animals continue to lose their lives in the face of readily available alternatives. The recent dark events of Tangipahoa Parish, LA are a stark reminder of just how far we have yet to go in too many communities. But we will get there. The tide has decidedly shifted in our favor. In the words of the great Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "We are marching no longer by ones and twos but in legions of thousands, convinced now it cannot be denied by any human force."

Tonight, I will toast to all of the animal lovers and activists, the feral cat caretakers and rescuers, the Pit Bull advocates and the mutt lovers, the volunteers and the foster parents, the bloggers, and protesters who continue to beat the drums of No Kill: *Stop the killing. Stop the killing. Stop the killing.*

My toast to you: *Never surrender. Never give in. Never doubt that we will succeed. A No Kill nation is within our reach!*