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# We cannot adopt, warehouse or rescue our way out of dog & cat overpopulation!

FEBRUARY 3, 2017 BY [MERRITT CLIFTON](#) — [50 COMMENTS](#)



*Jeff Young (Facebook photo)*

***by Jeff Young,  
DVM***

My name is Jeff Young. I have been a veterinarian for more than 25 years.

I have been on numerous humane society boards, was an animal control officer before I became a veterinarian, and I speak and consult on companion animal overpopulation issues all over the world. I have done more than 180,000 spay/neuter surgeries in the last twenty years, and have established full service

training hospitals in Bratislava, Slovakia and Merida, Mexico. I have trained more than 350 veterinarians in efficient and safe surgical techniques.

## One simple goal

From the moment I graduated from vet school, I have had one simple goal: to reduce the population of unwanted dogs and cats around the world. As a veterinarian, I found that I could do so simply by providing and promoting low-cost spay/neuter.

Over the last several decades, there has been a considerable reduction in dog and cat overpopulation, driven by the rise of educational groups like the Spay USA subsidiary of the North Shore Animal League, mobile spay/neuter clinics like those operated by the Montana Spay Neuter Task Force, and the construction of mega-sterilization clinics like the one built by the Animal Foundation of Nevada in Las Vegas, opened in 1989 and now emulated worldwide.



*Jeff Young at work with two vet techs.  
(Facebook photo)*



*Marian's Dream booth at 2014 AVMA conference. Spay/USA founder Esther Mechler, who now heads Marian's Dream, is at right.*

far too much money on housing animals, building expensive facilities, and paying elaborate salaries. They tend to be run like for-profit businesses.

## “Surplus waste”

But each year, worldwide, as many as 300 million dogs and perhaps nearly as many cats are killed, sometimes captured and sold for meat, fur, or laboratory use, sometimes poisoned in the streets, sometimes drowned as puppies or kittens, and sometimes just quietly, efficiently, and invisibly killed in animal shelters, simply because they represent “surplus waste.”

The number one cause of death for dogs and cats in the developed world is still euthanasia. Large humane societies waste

Smaller rescue groups often lean toward the “animal collecting business,” and are often poorly run and set up by self-gratifying little chieftains.

*(See **Casualties of the “save rate”**: 40,000 animals at failed no-kill shelters & rescues.)*

## More expensive care for ever-fewer pets

Veterinarians don't tend to view dog and cat overpopulation as something our profession needs to address. Mainstream private practice veterinarians treat a smaller percentage of the companion animals in our society each year, while providing more complex, advanced, and expensive medicine to a shrinking percentage of financially affluent owners.

Reality is that as our level of technology and medical knowledge increases, the number of animals who benefit from these advances decreases.



*(Beth Clifton photo)*

There is little debate that animal laws and public awareness, especially with regard to companion animals, are changing. Circa 1970, a range of estimates report, U.S. animal shelters were killing from 13 to 23 million dogs and cats per year. The current shelter toll, estimated with increasing precision because more states now have mandatory data tracking is between 2.5 and 2.7 million.

*(See **Record low shelter killing raises both hopes & questions.**)*

## Exaggerated claims

But euthanasia numbers only account for what becomes of animals who are admitted to shelters in the first place, at a time when shelters desperate to lower their euthanasia totals and increase their “live release” rates are making themselves increasingly inaccessible to people who for whatever reason want or need to surrender animals who may not be easily adopted out.



*“Brought to Calaveras County Animal Services by a good samaritan,” according to text accompanying this Facebook photo, this pit bull was clearly in a fight, but there is no verification offered that it was as an alleged bait dog.*

treatable--and meanwhile striving to avoid receiving those animals, who are the animals most in need of humane care.

## Great marketing

Humane organizations have done a lot of great marketing to make so much out of so little. Many get rich while pretending they generally care about the plight of companion animals, while demonstrating genuine care of fewer and fewer.

I am here to ask you, the public, to demand that humane organizations start making a real difference.

First, you must understand that you cannot, and I repeat, cannot adopt, warehouse or rescue your way out of overpopulation!

Humane organizations play with words and statistics to make us feel better about overpopulation, euthanasia and shelters, many of which are still little more animal warehouses, albeit fancier warehouses than a few decades ago.

Humane organizations make it appear they have done or are doing so much more than they really are. They boast that *only* 2.5 to 2.7 million animals are killed because of all their hard work. Many boast that they only euthanize unadoptable animals, and even claim to be “no-kill,” while using definitions of “unadoptable” that include animals with broken legs, ringworm, bad upper-respiratory disease, urinary issues due to diet, and other conditions that are easily



*PetSmart Charities' Rescue Waggin' van. Moving adoptable animals from grim animal control shelters to adoption boutiques saves lives, but adoption transport too often just moves dangerous dogs from one jurisdiction to another.*

*(See **Why we cannot adopt our way out of shelter killing.**)*



*Maddie's Adoption Center in San Francisco, opened in 1996, introduced an overdue revolution in animal shelter design, but also inspired many organizations to build "adoption palaces" instead of effective spay/neuter outreach programs.*

## “Large shelters are a waste of money”

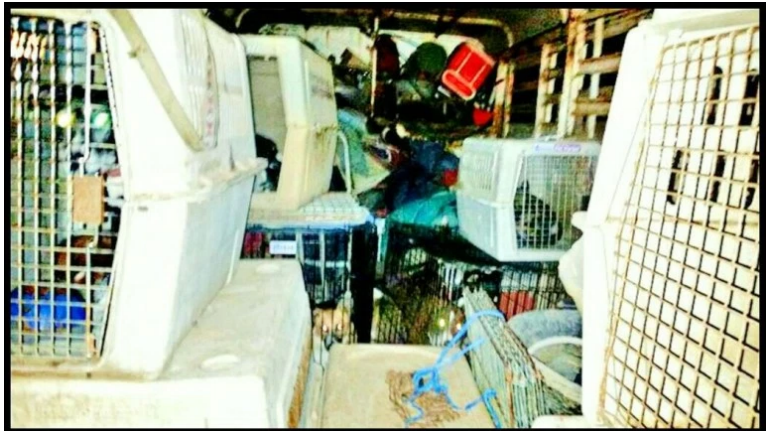
People think they can help by donating to tangible things like brick-and-mortar projects to give animal shelters “nice new buildings.”

The truth is that large shelters are simply a waste of money. I cannot argue they don't do some good, but large shelters, whether they are “kill” or “no-kill,” are not cost-effective for what society gets in return.

I argue that euthanasia should never be accepted as a form of population control. It is simply not the solution.

## Warehousing

But do not get me wrong: there are things far worse than death for many animals. For example, being warehoused in a poorly managed “no-kill” shelter can be far worse than death!



*(Beth Clifton photo)*

I have heard some good no-kill shelters exist--the editors of **ANIMALS 24-7**, who have made a point of inspecting the best, attest to the quality of many-- but I personally have never seen a no-kill shelter that wasn't overtly practicing cruelty to animals or was at best neglectful in their care. And yes, this includes some of the large no-kill shelters worth millions of dollars.

It is humane organizations, I find, that are the most hypocritical of all.

## “Primary focus must be on s/n”

To get totally radical, humane groups could literally take all their animals to animal control/government agencies or refuse to accept any new animals.



*Jeff Young, DVM.  
(Beth Clifton collage)*

## **“No-kill shelters are the most inhumane trend”**

Once again warehousing and adopting will never solve the overpopulation problem. I believe “no-kill” shelters are the most inhumane trend in animal welfare. The trend toward every shelter trying to become a “no-kill” shelter has allowed for hoarding, collecting, and warehousing sick and dying animals to become widespread norms, while euthanizing even the animals most in need of euthanasia to end their suffering is abhorred.

Practicing “no-kill” sheltering while either neglecting animals or turning away animals in need does not mean you love animals. It means you love the idea of animals, you love the money that being “no-kill” guarantees, and/or you love the idea of your great sacrifice for the animals.

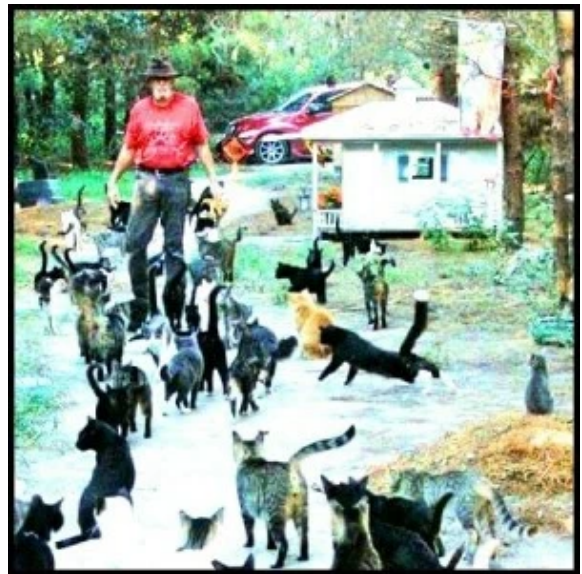
What a joke! The only sacrifice involved, too often, is the physical, psychological and general well-being of the animals who are either brought into “care” or denied care.

## **“Less & less emphasis on facts & results”**

This might force local officials and society to truly deal with the overpopulation problem. If humane groups are truly interested in solving overpopulation, then their primary focus must be on spay/neuter. Even if that means doing it for free, and even if that means offending veterinarians.

The secondary focus has to be education. Education means not only reaching out to schools, but also providing behavioral counseling and training classes to the public.

## **“No-kill**



*700 cats were impounded in 2012 due to alleged neglect from Caboodle Ranch, a no-kill cat shelter in Florida, which reportedly had \$80,000 in the bank at the time.*

*(Facebook photo)*



*The American Veterinary Medical Association recently criticized Jeff Young, DVM for doing this surgery bare-armed, instead of in surgical scrubs. Responded Young, "Let's take a look at outcomes. I challenge any vet at any time to do 100 surgeries at the same time I do and compare outcomes. Look people, our patients lick their own asses. We are working on animals with great immune systems. The biggest threat we should be concerned about is all the antibiotic use. Where do you get bad life-threatening infections? At human hospitals with very strict sterility. By the way, I get to cut off the legs of many pets coming from fancy hospitals all the time due to horrible resistant infections. The challenge is out there; let's compare."*

profession, as they should be the true sentinels of animal welfare in America.

## **"Stop giving blindly"**

They, we, and I have failed miserably with this task. However, it is never too late to correct the course we have chosen. It does take work, energy, and desire to make the right decisions and be willing to stand our ground.

I implore anyone reading this to make a change and stop giving blindly. Give with conditions and give with true compassion. Give to make a real difference and stop buying into all the marketing in the animal community.

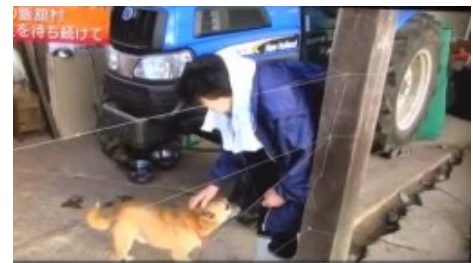
Remember that while brick-and-mortar looks great, it does nothing in the long run to truly solve the problems

The saddest part is that we Americans live in the richest country on earth, yet I see a lot of countries that have already figured these things out.

America is all about marketing and perception with less and less emphasis on facts and results.

Once again, there are many things far worse than death. So, as you give your money, be sure you know what you are getting in return. Far more people are contributing to the problem than contributing to the solution.

I don't blame society in general, but I most certainly blame the so-called animal welfare movement and the veterinary



***Money donated to help animals after the 2011 Fukushima disaster remains unspent, yet dogs like Taiyo still need help.***

we have. Also remember that simply being alive does not imply quality of existence.



*(Faye McBride photo)*

## **“Vets contribute to suffering”**

Veterinarians contribute to companion animal suffering with their hypercritical opinions regarding the value of companion animals, and their ability to routinely rationalize charging \$3,000 – \$5,000 for procedures that can easily be done for far less.

Okay, so it's the American way. We're all about market forces. Veterinarians can't be “forced” to change what they do! Or better yet,

veterinarians do not want to lower the “standard of care” to their beloved clients. Now that's a good one! Let's see, if you can't afford a \$3,000 surgery (say an exploratory for a foreign body), then you have to put your pet to sleep?

Where did the value or compassion go? They're not going to tell you about low-cost alternatives; they're not going to lower the price for the single mom with two kids and a minimum wage job.



## **“It's better just to kill your pet and get a new one?”**

Your animal is so valuable to veterinarians, and their level of medicine is so high, that it's better just to kill your pet and get a new one?

After all, new animals are a dime a dozen.

You can argue that some people should not have animals, but they do. They probably should not have the children that they have either.

## **“People and dogs/cats have evolved together”**



Reality is people and dogs/cats have evolved together for thousands of years. There is great benefit, both physically and mentally, to having companion animals. Having raised three kids with a yellow lab, I'm here to say that dog was very much a part of my family.

I have always been able to make the distinction between humans and animals. But, I can't say that all humans are better than that dog of mine. My dog had more to offer me and my little part of the world than a lot of humans in this world.

We have come to identify "our pets" as part of the family and yes they are very important to our little worlds. So telling a poor person, an over extended person, a person of unfortunate circumstances, that it's \$3,000 or death to their family member, just isn't an ethical, moral, or compassionate option.



*(Merritt Clifton collage)*



*(Beth Clifton collage)*

## **“Old, fat white guys”**

The only light I see in the veterinary industry is that we graduate more women than men these days, of course much to the dismay of all the old, fat white guys in the three piece suits. These women are actually forcing compassionate changes in the industry.

A lot of veterinarians want it both ways. They want to believe their time and skills are highly valuable, and that your companion animal is worthy of thousands of dollars of investment, but--and a very big but--if you don't have enough money, then the value of the animal changes to virtually nothing.

Clearly, from this perspective, value is not intrinsic to any given animal, but rather is solely based on the owner's perception and financial abilities.

# “All companion animals have true intrinsic value”

There has never been a clear line in my mind as to when too much is in truth too much.

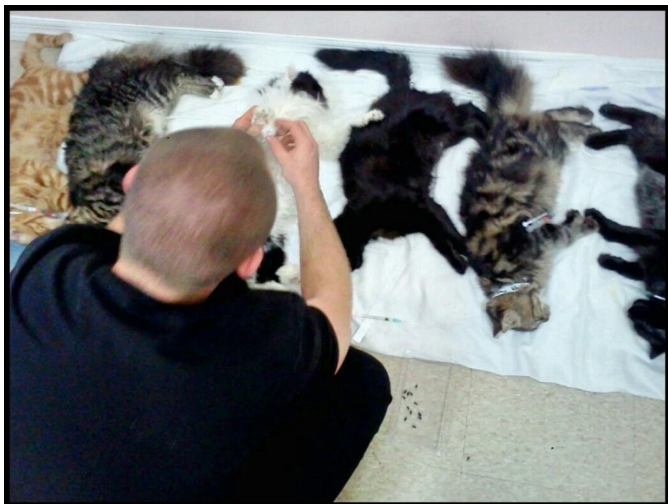
There has always been a clear line in my mind that all companion animals have a true intrinsic value.

If anyone believes that most veterinarians became veterinarians because they love animals, or generally think about animal welfare on a level other than financial, then I am here to tell you that you are sadly mistaken. Having said all that, as a veterinarian, I can tell you that in order to help others, you have to own a successful business.

Of course money is a factor in life, as are medical costs, educational costs, and the costs of running a business.



*(Beth Clifton photo)*



*Vet tech Kenny Robbins with newly sterilized cats.  
(Beth Clifton photo)*

the problem. But because veterinarians feel companion animal overpopulation is a societal issue, they can turn a blind eye.

I submit that we as veterinarians are uniquely qualified to deal with this societal issue. I further submit that if we as a profession deal with companion animal overpopulation, we will elevate our status as professionals in our society.

## “If animals were dying at the rate we euthanize them”

Unfortunately, very few veterinarians are as well trained in business as they are in medicine.

If animals were dying at the rate we euthanize them, the veterinary profession would be pouring tons of money and energy into research to solve

# “Spend more on s/n & education than on sheltering”

Being recognized both nationally and internationally for my work in the overpopulation debate, I promise never to waiver in my commitment to reduce the number of unwanted companion animals worldwide. I will never accept euthanasia as a form of population control. I will never support “no-kill” shelters in any way. I will never support “kill” shelters either, unless they spend more money on spay/neuter and education than they do on sheltering.

We cannot adopt, shelter, warehouse or kill our way out of dog and cat overpopulation. We can demand and change what we do, whom we support and how we support them.

If veterinarians really want animals to be more valuable in our society then, I submit, reducing the surplus of bodies will help accomplish this.



*(Dawn James image)*

I will continue to train vets from all over the world in safe, fast, efficient spay/neuter techniques. I will continue to build clinics in other countries to use as training centers. I will continue to spay or neuter every companion animal that passes through my doors. We have a moral and ethical contract with our companion animal friends and we must honor this contract!

**Please help us continue speaking truth to power:**



*(Beth Clifton photo)*

## Basic economics

If the supply goes down and demand is the same, then value increases. This is basic economics. Thus, if you don't do spay/neuter for humane or ethical reasons, then you can obviously do it for longterm monetary benefit.

I will continue to train vets from all over the world in safe, fast, efficient spay/neuter techniques. I will continue to build clinics in other countries to use as training centers. I will continue to spay or neuter every companion animal that passes through my doors. We have a moral and ethical contract with our companion animal friends and we must honor this contract!