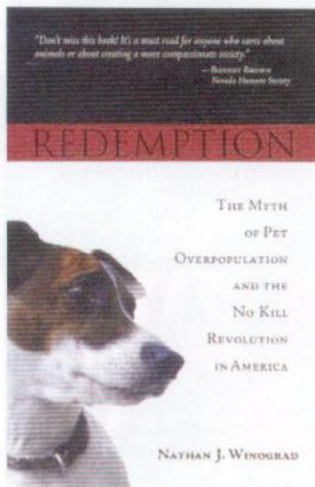


Redemption, The Myth of Pet Overpopulation

Redemption, The Myth of Pet Overpopulation and the No Kill Revolution in America, by Nathan Winograd, is a powerful, inspirational book that is a must read for any animal lover. The basic premise of the book is that the notion of Pet Overpopulation is indeed a myth. The reason that approximately 5 million companion animals are dying in animal shelters each year across our country is not due to pet overpopulation, but rather because shelter leadership is failing to implement the programs and services that are necessary to save these lives.

By Pam Carey

THE BOOK BEGINS



with a comprehensive review of the history of the humane movement in the United States, starting with the founding of the first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), the American SPCA, or ASPCA, in New York City in 1866 by Henry Bergh.

The mission of the ASPCA and the other SPCA's which sprouted up around the country, was to prevent cruelty to animals; to protect animals from people. This was fundamentally at odds with that of the taxpayer funded city shelters (the "pounds"). Their primary

mission was to protect people from animals. Henry Bergh felt very strongly that the two were separate and distinct movements. When asked if the ASPCA would take over the function of rounding up strays and then disposing of them, Bergh refused. He believed that the ASPCA was a tool to champion and protect life, not to end it.

But that changed when Bergh died in 1888. Under new leadership, the ASPCA accepted a contract to run the city pound, and by 1910, the ASPCA was impounding dogs and cats on behalf of the city, with most of them unfortunately being put to death. Most other SPCA's across the country followed suit. It is important to note that at this point in our history, stray animals were being killed in terribly inhumane ways by city shelters, including drowning (in public!), beating and shooting. One of the reasons that private SPCA's got involved with these animal control contracts, and therefore the killing of homeless pets, was so that the animals would not suffer such a painful death, that they would be killed in more humane ways. It is also important to note that the ASPCA no longer holds the animal control contract in New York City.

Although the intention may have been honorable, the impact, Winograd argues, was to dilute and distract from the primary mission of these SPCA's, which was to protect the lives of animals. Instead, the business of rounding up and ultimately killing the majority of these homeless animals became the centerpiece of most of the SPCA's across the country – adopting a few and killing the rest. This, according to Winograd, is when the humane movement started to lose its way.

Fast forward to 1976 when a newcomer to animal welfare, Richard Avanzino, a successful businessman and politician, was hired as the Executive Director of The San Francisco SPCA. In 1989, he gave up the animal control contract with the city of San Francisco. In 1994, he spearheaded the "Adoption Pact" which guaranteed a home to all healthy dogs and cats in San Francisco. By implementing a series of life saving programs and services, one year after the Adoption Pact, San Francisco became the first city in the country to save all healthy animals, and the deaths of sick and injured (treatable) animals dropped by nearly 50 percent. In the first five years of the Adoption Pact, cat deaths declined by over 70 percent

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and dog deaths by 75 percent. When Avanzino left the SF SPCA in 1998, San Francisco's shelter killing was a fraction of the national average.

The success of San Francisco was unparalleled anywhere else in the country. But rather than celebrate, applaud and emulate their results, many in the humane community instead tried to undermine the success in San Francisco. It was called "more hoax than fact." It was argued that the success was largely due to the city's homosexual population, claiming that "the gay community is traditionally the most animal friendly." Some said it could only happen in a wealthy urban community.

Nathan Winograd, a former prosecuting attorney and lifelong animal advocate, was the Director of Operations at the San Francisco SPCA, under Richard Avanzino. In 2000, Winograd left the San Francisco SPCA and became the Executive Director of the Thompsons County SPCA in Ithaca, New York. Thompsons County SPCA is an open admission animal control agency. By implementing critical life saving programs and services, in two years, the death rate declined by 75 percent. Within three years, Thompsons County became the safest community for homeless animals in the United States, saving 93 percent of all dogs and cats who entered the shelter. Thompsons county became the first No Kill community, saving all healthy and treatable dogs and cats, and all feral cats through the use of Trap-Neuter-Return, or TNR.

The crux of the No Kill model is a set of programs and services that Winograd refers to as the No Kill Equation. These mandatory programs and services are:

- 1) Feral cat TNR program
- 2) High volume, low cost spay/neuter services
- 3) Working with rescue groups
- 4) Foster care program
- 5) Comprehensive adoption program
- 6) Pet retention programs
- 7) Medical and behavioral rehabilitation programs
- 8) Public relations, community involvement
- 9) Working with volunteers
- 10) Compassionate director

After leaving the Thompsons County SPCA in 2005, Winograd founded the No Kill Advocacy Center, a nonprofit dedicated to the creation of a No Kill nation. Winograd has helped numerous facilities implement the No Kill model with dramatic life saving results. Some notable examples include Fulton County in Atlanta, Charlottesville, Virginia, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Prior to implementing the No Kill Equation, Fulton County Animal Control had about a 90 percent kill rate. Within a year of implementing the life saving programs and services of the No Kill Equation, their kill rate was cut in half.



Nathan Winograd, Author of Redemption

The time has come to stop arguing with results. The animals are counting on us.

The Charlottesville Albermarle SPCA is an agency which contracts for animal control sheltering in Charlottesville, Virginia. In a little over a year after implementing the No Kill Equation, the Charlottesville SPCA saved over 90 percent of all dogs and cats.

The Philadelphia Animal Care and Control Association had a kill rate near 80 percent. Within 7 months of implementing the No Kill Equation, they saved more than 50 percent of the animals entering

their facility, a milestone that had never been achieved before.

Winograd argues, any shelter that truly wants to save lives must fully embrace and implement all elements of the No Kill Equation. This book is informative, insightful and rational. It is important to anyone who has an interest in companion animals. It is a critical read for anyone truly interested in building a No Kill community.

This book will no doubt be controversial in some quarters of the humane movement, as Winograd does not mince words, nor pull any punches when it comes to criticizing organizations that he feels have failed to do all they can to build a No Kill nation, to save even more animal's lives. Hopefully counterproductive reactions, like defending positions and other related activities are a thing of the past because this does not result in any more lives being saved. And in fact, expending energy on these types of activities actually has the opposite effect because precious resources get diverted from the most important task at hand, that of saving animals lives. Hopefully every shelter management team and Board of Directors

take a long hard look at the No Kill Equation, and vigorously implements all of these programs and services.

An especially refreshing aspect of this book is the inspirational tone and message of hope. Winograd argues, not only is saving all healthy and treatable animals possible, as has already been demonstrated, it's inevitable. But the longer it takes, the larger the toll in body count of our innocent, amazing four-legged friends.



Pam Carey, CPA, MBA, is a regular contributor to *Angel Tales* magazine, and is the President of PAWS Chicago. Prior to joining PAWS in 2003 as Executive Director, Pam served in numerous management roles at BP Amoco, one of the world's largest energy companies.