



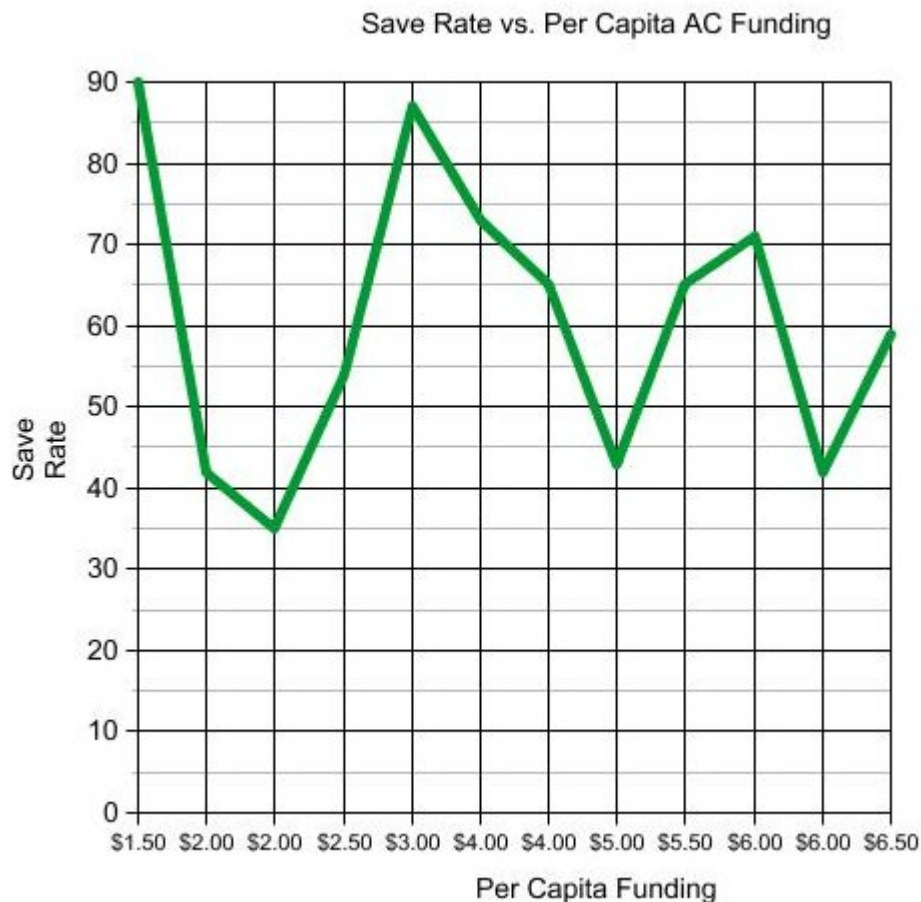
## The Cost of Saving Lives

June 2009

*A survey of animal shelter funding and save rates conducted by the No Kill Advocacy Center finds that if communities want lifesaving success, they should invest in leadership.*

One shelter saved 90% of the animals. Another saved only 40%. One community has seen killing rates increase nearly 30%. Another has caused death rates to drop over 50%. There was, however, no correlation between success/failure and per capita spending on animal control. In other words, the difference between those shelters which succeeded and those which failed was not the size of the budget, but the commitment of its leadership.

Roughly, per capita funding ranged from about \$1.50 to about \$6.30. Save rates ranged from 35% (\$2.00 per capita) to 90% (\$1.50 per capita), but they did not follow any predictable pattern. There were shelters with an 87% rate of lifesaving spending only \$2.80 per capita, and shelters with a 42% rate (less than half of the former) spending more than double that (at \$5.80 per capita):



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In other words, the amount of per capita spending did not seem to make a difference. What did make a difference was leadership: the commitment of shelter managers to saving lives.

While communities should provide adequate funding, only throwing money at the problem will do very little without leadership committed both to lifesaving and to accountability. In King County, WA, the City Council has spent millions of additional dollars since three independent evaluations in 2007 and 2008 revealed high rates of illness, deplorable conditions, cruelty and uncaring at King County Animal Care & Control (KCACC). In fact, until recently, the King County Council has never denied a funding request for KCACC. But no improvement in animal care has been made despite the allocation of millions of additional dollars. Animals continue to languish, continue to get sick because of poor care, continue to go untreated, continue to suffer, and continue to die.

In Portland, OR, likewise:

Over the course of the past few years (fiscal years 2003 through 2008), a period during which the total number of animals brought into the shelter increased by only 5 percent and the agency's budget increased by 50 percent (to a current \$4.6 million), nearly every measure of the agency's performance documents failure. Adoptions are down by 40 percent (dogs) and 18 percent (cats). Nearly half of the dogs not returned to owners are killed; so too are nearly two-thirds of cats. The "kill rate" is now well above rates in neighboring counties facing far more severe budget limitations. Thousands of dollars are squandered on adversarial enforcement efforts that have achieved no meaningful improvement in the public's safety. The number of animals saved by cooperating life-saving organizations and individuals, a number widely recognized as a key measure of community support, has dropped by 40 percent.

That doesn't mean that governments should continue underfunding their shelters. Shelters with low per capita spending claimed difficulty sustaining programs. As a result, the study should not be used as an excuse to reduce shelter budgets.

It does mean, however, that to really make an impact, communities must also invest in progressive leaders willing to embrace the programs and services which make No Kill possible. In the final analysis, the most important element of the No Kill Equation ([www.nokilladvocacycenter.org/nokillequation.html](http://www.nokilladvocacycenter.org/nokillequation.html)) is:

A hard working, compassionate animal control director who is not content to continue killing by hiding behind the myth of "too many animals, not enough homes" or regurgitating tired clichés about public irresponsibility.

Some additional findings of the study included:

**Finding:** Governments which run their own pounds pay more than if they contract out to private shelters.

**Conclusion:** Private SPCAs and humane societies have been subsidizing animal control for so long that it has become the unfair and unreasonable expectation of municipalities that these private non-profits should continue to do so. Assuming that the agencies will retain these contracts despite compensation levels that fail to cover the actual costs of running animal control, and regardless of whether they are No Kill or killing shelters, governments are, in effect, having shelters use private donations to subsidize a government mandate. As a result, these shelters are using money raised for adoptions, medical care, and other lifesaving work to pay the cost of sheltering and killing stray and seized animals under their animal control obligations. Donor funding may also be used to enforce often arcane and inhumane animal laws (e.g., breed bans, cat leash laws, feeding bans, pet limit laws) which are inconsistent with lifesaving.

**Finding:** Government-run or municipal animal control shelters had higher rates of lifesaving than private non-profit shelters administering animal control contracts, but this was not dependent on funding levels.

**Conclusion:** One possibility is that if a community has both an animal control shelter and a distinct private shelter, the private shelter can maximize its donations to increase spay/neuter, adoptions, and other programs rather than subsidizing animal control leading to improved lifesaving rates. In addition, with two shelters working in a community, there are greater resources available for the animals (including cage/kennel space). But this requires further analysis. It is not clear that each of these communities also had a private humane society, had a private humane society which worked with them, and/or had a private humane society which actually cared about saving lives.

*Please note: The findings are preliminary and still being analyzed.*