



Cats and Capacity for Care, Part 1

Dr. Kate Hurley

Video Transcript

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[Beginning of Audio]

Facilitator:

Dr. Hurley is the Director of the UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program and a pioneer in shelter medicine. With the support of Maddie's Fund in 2001, Dr. Hurley became the first in the world to undertake a residency in shelter medicine, and she frequently refers to herself as the feral resident *[Laughs]*. Somewhat unsupervised.

Dr. Hurley is co-author of the "Association of Shelter Veterinarians: Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters" and co-editor of the textbook "Infectious Disease Management in Animal Shelters". Her particular interests include welfare of confined dogs and cats, humane and effective strategies to manage community cats, infectious disease, and unusually short dogs. So please help me welcome Dr. Hurley *[Applause]*.

Dr. Kate Hurley:

Thank you. How many of you have heard me speak before. Wow. Hi, all you old friends *[Laughs]*. Sorry if I drone on about the exact same things you've heard me drone on about five times already. How many of you have never heard me speak before? Excellent. Welcome. Hi.

For those of you who have heard me speak before, you've probably heard me say, because I'm excitable, that this is the most exciting thing I've ever talked about *[Laughs]*. And I said that when we first figured out the key behind managing feline upper respiratory infection because that – at that time, that rocked my world.

I sure said it after we released the "Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters" in 2010 because at that time, that rocked my world, I said it last year when I gave the Tipping Point for Cats talk just about a year ago at expo in Nashville, and I say it again now and it's still as true as it always was. What I'm talking about today is so much more hopeful, so

much more accessible with so many fewer compromises for either shelters or cats or communities than I ever would have hoped possible.

The answer to all the struggles that we've had with providing care for cats turns out to be so much easier and so much more fun than I ever could have expected when I started in animal sheltering in 1989.

I'm starting with a prelude. I've never done this before, but I'm getting sophisticated now. Does that look like a beautiful picture to you? Raise your hand if you think that's gorgeous. A few of you think so. It's not pretty cages, it's not from a fancy shelter or a shelter with a lot of money, but it's a beautiful picture to me. It's beautiful because they're empty and there's a beautiful reason for them being empty. And I love it that this isn't a fancy shelter and those aren't gorgeous cages because that means that the solution that this shelter found is a solution that's accessible to all shelters.

And to just give you a little bit of history, back in 2011 – my other hobby is same-sex ballroom dancing and I was wanting to attend a competition in Vancouver, British Columbia, and I wanted to make my travel cost tax deductible. So I had a friend who was doing relief work at the Vancouver branch of the British Columbia SPCA and I called her up and I said, "Hey, I will give a free talk on any subject for your shelter."

And so sure enough, I competed, whew-hoo. I was – I won first out of two couples [*Laughs*]. It's kind of like being the first shelter medicine resident in the world [*Applause*]. I was the best for a while. And I love this because that was the sign. It was just, like, "Dr. Kate Hurley that way. Parking that way [*Laughs*]."

I – you know, whatever. They picked the title, they picked the topic. I threw together some slides and I went and spoke to them. And time passed, had a little bit more communication with them, but I didn't hear, you know, much about what had all transpired. And then I got this email. "I really wanted to share the success that the South Peace Shelters had based on a many wonderful ideas presented by Dr. Hurley in the Capacity for Care Workshop. As a manager of a very small branch servicing a very large area and a supporter of welfare-based care, I've struggled with a large quantity of cats entering our facility versus providing optimal care."

Sound familiar? "It was very obvious to me that overpopulation in a cat area created high stress, resulting in high incident of URI, making our cats less attractive to adopters. We've managed to reduce our in-care inventory from an average of 120 to under 50. I've attached a picture of Saturday's emptied by adoption cat room that is ready for next week's surrenders." That's why that picture is so beautiful to me.

"What has been crystal clear here is that this model works and the real winners are the cats. In a recent conversation, I had to think very hard about when I last saw a cat with herpes URI systems at the South Peace Shelter. What we did see is an increase in cat adoption. I recently sat down to determine our adoption rate based on the number of cats coming into our shelter versus total number of cats adopted for the year. Here's what it looked like."

Wow. "I've seen a shift in the attitude of the public. We are becoming the place where people come for the best cats and dogs. There's certainly a higher volume of happy public traffic these days. The staff and animals give three cheers to the Capacity for Care Guidelines. Clearly the animals win."

So I got that email and I thought, "Huh. What did I talk about? Because that sounds good [*Laughs*]. I want in on that." So this is the talk that I gave that evening in Vancouver with a little bit more information refinement based on both the experience of the BC SPCA and the shelters. They have 36 shelters in their system, so they were able to implement this and get a lot more information about how it can work and from other shelters that have implemented these principles since then. But basically, this is the same talk I gave. I'm just not wearing my gold medal, but I probably should.

There is a lot of cats. There's a lot of cats in this world. How much? Capacity to care for cats is enough and how do we get there in every shelter no matter your budget, no matter your intake?

This is a slide from a talk I gave in 2002, one of my very first slides that I ever put together. I drew the pictures because I didn't know how to – there was no such thing as clip art in those days [*Laughs*]. Here's the bottom line for shelters. Unless you're a sanctuary, numbers in have to equal numbers out over time, right? Eventually, those two things have to balance. That hasn't changed. That basic math principle hasn't changed since 2002, so that's not one of the breakthroughs. We haven't had a magic way to make numbers in not have to equal numbers out.

But this was my understanding in 2002 was that the numbers in alive were higher than the numbers out alive and that there was really no easy answer to bring those two numbers in balance, and that was a real sadness that was at the core of everything that we did with cats in shelters. Fast forward.

This is my new understanding based on new programs that have been developed and a reevaluation of some things that we always believed were true, and it took us a long time to get around to going back and

questioning. We can control numbers in. Even at an open intake shelter, there's room for scheduling, there's room for creating pathways that make it easier for people to bring cats in for spay and neuter, easier for them to keep the cats in their own home or rehome them responsibly themselves rather than bring them into a shelter when it would exceed their capacity to move them out alive.

There's room on the other end to remove barriers to adoption. We understand that much better now. We're much better about doing open adoptions, having conversations with the doctors instead of grilling them like I used to do when I was an adoption counselor. We understand that people will bond with cats even if they get them for a low price or for free. So we're doing a lot more with bringing those two numbers into balance. And more and more I run across shelters where in and out does come pretty close to matching.

How many of you are in that situation, in and out, eventually they come into balance, you're not euthanizing cats that walk in the door healthy? Some. How many of you could say that ten years ago? None. So really great progress. How many of you want to be saying that ten years from now? Pretty much all of you. I'm guessing those who didn't raise their hands don't have animal shelters because that's what we're all working for, right?

And this can be done and that's the subject of another talk. Happy to come back and talk with you again. But also, what about what happens in between those two arrows? So actually, where I focused a lot of my work, whatever happens at the outcome, one of the things I love about sheltering is that we can always determine what happens while the animal is in our care. So when I worked in an animal shelter back in 1989 where only one out of four cats left alive, at least I would say to each cat that came into my care, "While you're here with me, I will do my best to give you a safe place, a quiet place, a comfortable place to be, even if this is the last place you ever experience."

So that matters. It matters for the animals, it matters for the workers and the volunteers of the shelter to be able to give that gift to the animals in our care. Does what happen in the middle make the arrows balance out? If we just put enough cats in the shelter, can that save their lives? Nope. If we build a bigger shelter, will that solve the problem of that incoming arrow? Nope. But in some ways, what happens in the middle can help make the arrows balance.

What if we cut the sides of the shelter in half and there's half as many cats and we have half as much work to do every day? Could that help make the arrows balance? If staff have time to pick up the phone when it rings

and counsel someone whose cat is peeing outside the litterbox instead of waiting until it comes in the door, that can make that in arrow get a little bit smaller.

If staff have time to be in the adoption area and help match-make between people and animals, staff have time to take a really good photograph, if animals are comfortable and relaxed and presenting their best self, that can help make that out arrow bigger. If the system, as a whole, is working more efficiently, then we spend less resources on managing a mess that's happening in the middle and more resources out in the community, which is the source of that incoming arrow in the first place.

What happens in the middle matters tremendously both for the animals and for the community and the success of the whole system.

So capacity for care, which the folks in the BC SPCA nicknamed C for C, is about setting the bar for what happens in the middle. Now I'm going to step away from animal shelters for a minute and talk about budgets. And I am massively not an economist, as witnessed by the fact that I decided to devote my career to diseased homeless pets, which are not exactly a profit center, but this is very similar, right?

Money in has to equal money out. You could take some time where money in doesn't equal money out. For instance, I took four years to go to vet school, and money in did not equal money out [*Laughs*]. But ultimately, those two numbers have to come into balance or you have some real problems, right? So we know this. All of you have some sense of what your income is, and it's a function of the amount of hours you work times your compensation. Pretty simple.

And probably a lot of you know how that relates to your expenses. We don't just sort of spend money without regard to how much income we can expect to have. Right? And I'm not going to ask for a show of hands because I know you probably wouldn't want to raise your hand if you're not doing this [*Laughs*]. But for a lot of – you know, a lot of us in shelters haven't completely thought about income and expenses from a shelter perspective. "How much can we spend? And how are we going to spend it?"

Sorry about that. Sorry about that. There we go. Computer's frozen. We'll work this out. Here we go. What happens if the amount you spend is more than your income? Do you get more stuff? No. You get less stuff. Right? So I come from a – you know, I grew up in an open intake shelter. That was my first job and that's where I worked for six years. So we would take cats in, regardless of our capacity on a given day to provide

care, regardless of the number of positive outcomes we could anticipate within a reasonable amount of time.

So it's kind of like spending money, regardless of our expectation of how much we're going to earn to pay those bills at the end of the month. And there's been a tendency, and, you know, certainly, this was our tendency also, was to just take in cats until the shelter was full and then some. Just fit as many cats as we possibly could before we started making hard choices about making those numbers balance. And that's kind of like spending all the way up to your credit limit before you start thinking about how are you going to pay those bills? It doesn't work out well.

So this is how to get less of what you need. Your income is going to sit at – stay the same, but now your expenses are going to be your current expenses plus the interest on your previous expenses. So you're going to have less ability to buy good stuff over time. What can you do about this? Have any of you ever been in this situation where for a while you spent more than you earned? Like, if – so if you went to med school *[laughs]*, you almost certainly got into that situation in a pretty big way, but, you know, it can just happen on a one-month basis.

You get hit with a big bill, the engine calls out of our car, a tooth falls out of your head, you snap your ankle going for a walk, you know *[laughs]*, and you have to go into negative territory and you put some money on a credit card or you take out a loan. How do you get out of that? You can stay in it for a long time. You can just keep paying the minimum payment, just paying the interest, and, you know, constantly have a bite taken out of your paycheck that doesn't get you anything of what you need. Just paying for that one time where you spent more than you earned.

There's really only two ways out of this. You can earn more than you spend or you can spend less than you earn for a little while. And you got to pay that down and get back to where it has to just equal out and not be paying back for where the numbers didn't balance. And this is all going to come back to cats, but it just seems so much clearer sometimes with money.

Because what if you just keep spending more than you earn *[Laughs]*? And this is something that, as a nation, we went through a few years ago. It didn't work out that well, did it? Then we hit bankruptcy. So how does this equate to a shelter? You can think of our income, what we have to spend to get the good stuff for cats, as appropriate outcomes times capacity for care.

So we take in a cat and we don't have an adoptive home or an ability to sterile and release that cat or an opportunity to transfer that cat to another organization that can provide for us. We don't really have that wherewithal to pay for that intake in the way we want to. Even if we have a good outcome, but we don't have the capacity today to provide humane housing or adequate care for that cat, we don't really have the income to justify that expense. So it's confusing for us because intake is sort of the expense side of the thing and outcome is, like, our earning side of the equation, our income side of the equation.

Does that make sense? If this is totally confusing, let me know at the last fifteen minutes, but you can sort of wave your arm around now *[Laughs]*. Our expenses are driven by our intake times our length of stay. Every time we admit a healthy cat or a treatable cat to the shelter, we're incurring an expense, we're making a promise to that cat. "We're going to try and find you an appropriate outcome, and we're going to provide – try and provide you with capacity for care while you're here."

When we have totally uncontrolled intake, it's like spending without regard to your income. So we have to figure out how to make those numbers balance. This is what chronic debt looks like. A few more cats are being admitted than are released alive within a reasonable period of time. That's not all the cats that are going to come in this year, so all those cats are eventually going to have an outcome, but they got a little ahead, their intake got a little ahead of their outcome until there was cats in wire crates, there was cats stacked three high, there was cats on the floor.

And what's that doing? It's costing them more every single day in care, in stress, in illness, and it's probably costing them some adoptions because the cats are not presented well, they're not able to show their best behavior in this environment, so they're getting less good stuff over time.

The staff also is overwhelmed by the number of cats and the housing situation, so instead of helping adopters, they're screwing around trying to catch cats that escaped. They're making compromises in their cleaning and let cat – letting cats wander around during cleaning time when all the dirty stuff is going on not because they're bad or lazy, but because they just don't have time to get through it otherwise. And so they're having to see more disease in their cats. Then they're having to pay for the treatment and the disease problems that result.

You can have chronic debt in a group cat housing situation also where it's just overpopulated, the cats are stressed, potential adopters are overwhelmed, it doesn't smell good when you go in there, the cats' coats are sticky from stress, from not grooming and being on high alert all the

time. And again, adoptions slow down, ability for community outreach decreases.

And then in the worst-case scenario where you progress from a state of chronic debt to bankruptcy. And what that looks like varies by shelter from the dramatic terrible headlines that hopefully none of you will ever be a part of to an outbreak of disease that's not manageable by any other means than depopulation to dropped balls in terms of following procedure.

This is a letter to the editor in my own local shelter some years ago and now, happily, you know, this no longer happens, but their cat came in, got an upper respiratory infection, got really sick, incurred \$1,500.00 in vet bills, and their other cat got so sick they had it euthanized. And that was the letter to the editor. And you know that cost us adopters. So not only did it cost that adopter and that cat, but it cost us other cats down the line.

Sometimes bankruptcy is more subtle. And this is just a few rows from a spreadsheet of cats that came in healthy and their outcome was euthanized as unhealthy, untreatable, so they just got so sick in the shelter's care that we no longer had the ability to provide them with an appropriate outcome.

For some shelters, bankruptcy is as simple as a cat comes in beautiful, healthy, bright-eyed, and then gets sick. And even if you have the time and the space and you do treat that kitten and you get it back to health, it's just not how you want to be spending your time and your money and it's not the experience you want animals to have in your care. So we have urgent reasons to want to avoid chronic debt. We have urgent reason to want to avoid bankruptcy.

We can't do that, unless we have a clear understanding and on a month-by-month basis check in and monitor our spending and our expenses and our income. And it's surprising how few shelters have actually done this. So this was an email I got. "Our veterinarian is working on our cat fast-tracking plan. She gave the management team a reading assignment, a matter of measurement, defining capacity and detecting crowding, which was an early version of this work. We have 36 cages for stray hold; most months we need 48. We have 36 hours of care time needed and staffing for 28 hours a day. A real ah-ha moment for us for what our staffing and space needs are."

It's kind of like going and saying, "Hey, I just checked and I'm spending \$500.00 every month and I'm only earning \$300.00." Well, that would be bad. That's not very much money, but you know what I mean [*Laughs*]. It's just like saying, "Hey, there's a gap between what I'm spending and what I'm earning." The first step is to define the size of that gap and then

decide what you can do about it, whether you can earn more or whether you can spend less.

So maybe this shelter, if they can decrease their length of stay, maybe they could get away with 36 cages. Maybe they don't actually need 48. But if they can't decrease their length of stay and the gap between what they have and what they need is only twelve cages and they've been operating for twenty years, twelve cages short and dealing with the crowding and disease, the results for being twenty-five percent over capacity all the time, maybe they could do a fundraiser for twelve cages one time. Solve the problem one time and then move forward.

Same with staffing. Maybe they can drop their length of stay, drop their activities, make things easier on their staff so they can get away with the number of hours that they currently have. Or maybe they want to bump up their staffing so they can actually have a fighting chance of doing a good job because you don't know what to tackle until you know, "Hey, it's not 100 cages. It's just twelve. It's not 1,000 hours of staff time. Again, it's just twelve."

So first, let's talk about where we're going to set the bar in terms of, like, what good stuff do we need? And this is what the "Guidelines for Standards of Care" were based on, the five freedoms. Are you all familiar with the five freedoms? Yep. All familiar with the "Guidelines for Standards of Care"? I love them. I love the five freedoms. This just says so much about who I want to be and the profession I want to work in.

They were actually developed in the context of animals raised for food. And so I love that too because that seems so accessible. Like, really, really if we're going to provide these for animals raised for food, are we not going to provide them for animals, homeless pets in animal shelters? And also, because they're so simple. Who can argue against freedom from hunger and thirst, freedom from discomfort, freedom from pain, injury and disease, freedom to express normal behavior and freedom from fear and distress? Not every minute of the day, but for most animals, most of the time.

How are you guys doing? How many of you feel like you're providing the five freedoms for most cats in your care from the time they enter to the time they leave? Good. A few. Probably twenty percent. And I just want to help you think about sort of what is underlying the five freedoms? So this was a study that we did that looked at weight loss in cats in animal shelters and just a shelter with pretty typical housing. Thirty-seven out of fifty-eight cats, over half of them lost an average of six percent of their bodyweight in the first seven days of care. That's dramatic.

Some cats lost over ten percent of their bodyweight and that was closely linked to stress and also linked to a very high rate of upper respiratory infection in that shelter. And that shelter was feeding high-quality food, both wet and dry. So it's not enough to just set down the food and make it available. We also have to have a cage set up that prevents contamination. Cat's not going to eat if there's a turd in their food bowl because they kicked it from their litterbox, right? They're not going to drink if their water dish is tipped over or if it's filthy because, again, there's litter particles in it.

We have to have an environment that's conducive to normal food intake for cats. Cats are very susceptible to stress-induced food aversion. Cat – in fact, studies have shown that some cats will develop a food aversion if you're eating and you just give them a blast of air on their face. They'll develop an aversion to that food. So what do you think will happen if a cat's trying to eat and then you slam the bars of the cage next door to it or spray some chemical disinfectant?

So if we don't have a calm, quiet feeding time, we can't provide this freedom for all the cats in our care. Cats eat better when there's at least 30 centimeters of separation between – I mean 30 inches of separation, 90 centimeters of separation *[laughs]* between the food and litter. So if the cage setup absolutely prevents that separation, no, we can't provide this freedom for our cats.

So I don't know if you can see this, but there is a turd in the food bowl in the picture on the right. And the picture on the left, the litterbox is just too small for that big cat, so his fanny just hung over the side. And you can see he's looking at that turd in horror and chagrin like, "No. Who did that *[Laughs]?*"

And I'm going to try and present some partial fixes before you can do the whole C for C thing, the C change of it. So in the picture on the right, you can see that the litterbox is on the floor in the far corner and the food is actually elevated. So that can do two things. It maximizes the amount of distance between the litter and food and it also keeps it up off of the floor. And then the hide, perch and go structure is positioned such that the cat sits on top of the structure to eat. So no litter in the food and water and maximum separation possible. So that's one solution.

You can also get cage inserts that can keep food and litter separate and also create a little bit more functional area within a cage. You want to be careful that there's adequate room for a big cat to posture normally in the litterbox. So this is better set up for kittens and smaller cats, but that's another option while you're dealing with small cages.

But here's the real fix. This cat has knocked over his food, which you can see is sprinkled on the nice clean towel in the food side of the cage because his bathroom is off to the side. How many of you already have this cage setup in your – in all areas where cats are housed in cages? Raise your hands high. Yeah. You can probably leave [*Laughs*]. But bear with me anyway. You still might pick up a few pointers.

And the other part of the picture is not just space, but time, and that's so often the case when we're trying to provide the five freedoms for cats. They're not as noisy in their needs as dogs, and so we actually have to have time to observe. And this was the very simple monitoring sheet we used in our study. Just not eating, eating some, and eating, which meant they ate all their food.

And that in itself was very closely correlated to the behavioral stress score, which takes much more time to do, and was a quick, easy red flag that for whatever reason, this cat is not doing all right in our care. So of all the cats – some just didn't care and they just mowed through their food no matter what, right? There was those cats that didn't lose any weight at all.

But some that lost dramatic amounts of bodyweight, this would have been a way to let ourselves know, "Uh-oh. All is not well. Maybe this cat needs to go and be housed in a quieter part of the shelter. Maybe this cat is working on an upper respiratory infection or has dental disease and it needs wet food or a different kind of food. Maybe this cat needs to go out to foster care." Whatever it is, we could intervene as long as we have the monitoring. We can do the monitoring as long as we have the time.

The next one is freedom from discomfort and, you know, that doesn't seem as urgent as freedom from hunger and third. Like, at least we got to provide them food and water. I'm always very sympathetic to this one. I'm at a conference because I've been traveling and I've been sleeping on a pillow that is really just too big for my little head, and so I slept all night like this [*Laughs*]. And I'm in an unfamiliar environment and it's freezing in this conference center and I'm eating weird food [*Laughs*]. And I'm just not comfortable.

And luckily, you know, when I woke up this morning after my bad night's sleep and after eating a weird meal yesterday, I didn't have to come to my door of my hotel room, meet someone, persuade them to go on a date with me, and ask me to marry them and take me home [*Laughs*]. But that's what cats have to do. They got to be in a good state of mind to pull that off.

A study actually showed that cats have more REM sleep when they have at least three inches of bedding. That's so poignant. Like, I don't know

what their cute little REM sleep is even about and I want to know [laughs], but let's give them really soft bedding, more than just a folded towel in their cage. Room to really sink into something soft and cozy. But also, we know that cats use the environment to thermo-regulate, so we can't fill their whole cage with something soft and cozy. They also need a firm, cool surface to stretch out on.

You all have seen the pleasure of a cat just stretched out at its full possible body length on a cool tile floor. So there has to be room for that. They just have to have enough room to stretch out. Fifteen-by-thirty-six-inch clear space. There's not a litterbox, there's not a hiding box, there's not a food and water dish there. And I know that because I just went and I measured a lot of different cats and I came up with that recommendation based on the size of cats.

So you can see here at the shelter it's not a terrible cage. The cage in the upper picture. And they're making an effort by putting that feral box in there. There's some elevated space, there's a hiding space in there. But the cat still doesn't have room to take a normal posture of full relaxation and that'd be hard. You know, if they made our hotel rooms to conserve on space so that we just couldn't quite stand up straight, that'd be hard, even for an hour or two. It'd be hard for spending a week and then trying to get that date and that proposal of marriage.

Comfortable temperature and a dry, clean cage most of the time. And again, that comes back to both cage setup and also staff time to make sure that cleaning isn't still going on at 3:00 in the afternoon because there's so much work to be done. And here's a cat that I just happened to get a picture of, this whole scenario. This is at our local shelter before we did any cage modifications there. So she was just in a very standard single cage.

You can see she's a pretty cat. I don't know if you can tell that in the picture, but she was, like, a Siamese-Tabby mix, young adult, owner surrendered. And this was the third time she'd trashed her cage that morning. And her food is upside down under the litterbox. So she's sitting in her litterbox and she just looks miserable. And, you know, you might just conclude, like, "This is a crazy cat. This is not a cat that's going to do well in a home. She's just like – look at her, how destructive she is."

Just put her in one of the big runs that was usually used for mothers and litters and put a hiding box in there and put a big blanket in there and she went right in there and fell asleep with what seemed like an audible sigh of relief. So this is the one thing. If – you know, if you don't have a cage like that to offer, if you don't have the time to see that problem, you won't

realize who that cat actually was. She was just stressed by being in that tiny little cage.

And then taking it a level beyond comfort is just freedom from fear and distress. And this is, again, a really pretty cat. Not that I have a thing for Siamese, but they get adopted easily, and so this was a tortie, but she actually had blue eyes. You can't tell because the flash covered it, but she's on feline chill time observation. So she's trying to pull it together. And by her looks, she'd be a very adoptable cat, but what chance does she have to pull it together in that cage without a hiding box, without even any separation between her bed and her litterbox? And her food is right there.

So we have to give cats the opportunity to use their environment to help themselves cope with all the changes that they're going through. No dog sight or sound for cats. Even a little bit of dog sound can really add to cats' stress levels. And the smaller and more confining their environment, the worse the sound of dogs barking, the worse visual exposure to dogs becomes. So if you can't prevent dog sight and sound, then it becomes even more urgent to increase the number of tools that cats have to cope with that in their environment with good housing and with hiding areas and with elevated spaces to utilize to get away.

It's like being tapped in the trunk of someone's car and hearing people yelling threatening expletives about your particular ethnic group when you have no way to get away. It's even worse than hearing expletives yelled on a normal day when you can escape. So think about that.

Hiding place and visual protection, super important, but also super important that the hiding place not take up all the floor space in the cage, as I showed in the previous picture. Limited noise, in general, which means time for staff to be calm in their movements and interactions and cleaning and care duties. Protection from hostile interactions from other cats. So not so many cats in a group room that there's always going to be a bully there for the cats to worry about.

Limited environmental change. Cats are very sensitive to environmental change, whether it's moving from one cage to another, one room to another, or introduction of a new cat into a group. So we never tell people, "You know what? Here, take this cat that you just adopted and put your cat in the shower and put this cat in with it [*Laughs*]." That'll go well. And then do that every day with a new cat.

So we also want to create for the cats in the shelter, to the extent possible, an environment that's conducive to limited change and stable caretakers on a day-to-day basis, whether it's a staff member or a volunteer that instead

or racing around and spending two minutes with every cat, is coming in and spending a calm half-hour or hour with one cat.

So this was cat housing with just two Chihuahuas because we didn't want to put them in the big runs where they could slip and scootch out from under the chain link fence and race around out in our main dog housing area. And you can see that for much of the day – and this was a number of twenty-four-hour periods, so each spike and dip represents a twenty-four-hour period. Much of the day was spent above 85 decibel levels, which is the OSHA level for concern. Just with two darn Chihuahuas.

So this was the solution. This is actually another shelter, but they were having a similar situation where they took one of their big dog runs and moved some cages in there so that the little dogs couldn't squirt out and they were protected from each other. They weren't having to fight with each other for food. And this was actually nice because it made, like, a little get-acquainted and play area right in front of the cages, so you could take the animals out of the – take the little dogs out of the cages and get to know them in a less overwhelming context.

And in fact, portalized-caged housing for little dogs can really be very good housing and great housing for puppies. It gets them up off of unsealed concrete floors, which might be more able to harbor parvovirus and less easy to clean. And you can actually start them on training, on a crate training process. This is why the portals are important. You put a nice wee-wee pad on one side and the food and water on the other side and start to build the habit of urinating and defecating away from the bed, food and water part of the cage.

So at the point where the green arrow is, is where we took the two Chihuahuas out of the cat housing. And you can see the dramatic dip in overall noise level in that area really made a profound difference. What were those last remaining? Do you see there was a few little spikes where it still goes above that 85-decibel line? What do you think that was about? It was cleaning time, right? So one of the things that you can do at cleaning time, one, is make sure the staff has time and awareness of the importance of just calmly opening and closing cage doors in a controlled fashion.

For some cages, for Shoreline cages, you can actually get plastic replacement for the metal pieces that make such a loud clang. Those only cost a couple bucks. If they wear out, you can replace them again. So that can be another thing you can do. There's deadening patches that you can put on metal cages on the backs. Those are also only a few dollars that you can get from Shoreline and other cage manufacturers to lower the noise levels.

And in the long term, by having different materials that we use for cages, using disinfectants that are effective not just on stainless steel, but on laminate and other materials, can really quiet things down. And then breaking up cleaning from feeding time so that if it does get loud, at least it's not loud at the same time that feeding is going on so that he feeding time is not disrupted. So wait until cleaning is done. Then turn the lights down, play some soft music, go through and feed.

And this is a video that I – just recent so I had to show it. Got this at a shelter a couple of weeks ago where we were consulting about capacity for care. And this – we watched this cat all our first day and he was just crazed and he is cute as can be, right? But he's just a crazed kitten and he never stopped doing that. The next 26 hours he was upside down and he was meowing and he was actually sort of raising the anxiety level in that whole room because he was just, like, meowing and clawing and trying and trying and trying to get out.

There was actually a couple of cages there that had portals. So we put him in one of the portal cages. He wasn't a big cat so they didn't think of him as needing a big cage. And we put this little curtain on one side so he had one place that was protected and one place where he could be out and about and seeing what was going on. And this was just about half an hour after moving him into this cage after he had been frantic for two days straight.

Again, if you didn't have this cage available, you would never know what this cat's real nature was. He needed to stretch and then he could calm down. If you watch at the very end, he takes this huge sigh of relief. So here's some partial fixes. Something that you can go home and do tomorrow. On your left, it's called a curtailment because we invented it at the same time as the curtailments were going on. And this is an invention of Dr. Wagner, my colleague.

And what's nice is that it's elastic, so you can put it all the way across the cage when a cat is very stressed. And then when the cat is starting to relax, just move it so it's only covering half the front of the cage. You can also sew them shorter so that they can cover the whole bottom of the cage. This is really helpful if you have cages that are right along the floor to give cats some visual protection against dogs and whatnot walking by, but you can still see down in to make sure they're doing all right. Adopters can still see down in there to choose that cat for adoption. And you can get cute colors. Great use of calico fabric. Cute buttons for these. Just a couple bucks for the materials.

And then this is a really good solution for really small cages where if you put a solid hiding box in there, it's just going to take up all the floor space. So you can make – I mean, you can buy these beds, but if you make them yourself, we have the instructions on our website, you can make them to really match the exact dimensions of the cage. And especially if you have narrow, but tall cages, make them tall so that there's only about this much room left at the top. And that actually functions like another sort of secondary hiding space. The cat can kind of feel squished up and good and safe up there and look down on the world and around her.

And then you can put a towel – drape the towel over this so that it creates a little hiding space beneath there. And what we actually had in this setup is the food and water is under the bed and the litterbox is up front. So again, we have maximum separation between food, water, and litter. And you can see this little cat hiding for a while, but then getting more comfortable and coming and sitting on top of the bed. So two things you can do right away.

This is another solution to meet the needs of cats. Is this successful, though? So some of you already see the problem. Some of you have probably seen this movie already. This – again, common, but we happened to catch this in action. And you can cut the tension in this room with a knife, right? There's really no cat that's fully relaxed. The guarding cats, they might be eating, but they're still guarding. And obviously, the more submissive cats are just lurking, waiting for their chance.

So this shelter's tried. They've got multiple large good dishes, plenty of food, plenty of elevated spaces, but if you watch for a long time in this kind of situation, you'll begin to notice that some of the cats in the elevated spaces they don't ever come down. That is their space. That's their habitat is that little perch on that cat tree or whatever it is. And that's the kind of situation where if you go in there and you pet the cats and their fur feels sticky – there's this certain feeling that I used to think of as a feeling of a cat in a group room. It's the feeling of a cat in an overpopulated group room because they are too on guard to groom normally.

If you touch them when they look like they're sleeping and they're sort of in that meatloaf pose and they jump, that's not normal for a cat. Again, that's a sign that they're just constantly on guard. These things can be subtle, and so staff and volunteers have to have enough time to see those warnings signs. And what I've learned is they also have to have another possibility. You won't be able to see this if you think that doing anything about it means euthanizing more cats. So you have to have a better choice to be able to even acknowledge that there's a problem in the first place.

So this is well documented. Cats in group housing actually need more floor space than cats in single housing. Group housing is great to provide an enriched environment for a cat's social [*inaudible*] and present cats in a different way for people who are going to respond to that presentation. It is not a way to cram more cats into a building or get around providing adequate space for cats. Seriously. They need eighteen square feet of floor space in group housing.

And I made an online handy-dandy group housing calculator. So if you go to sheltermedicine.com and type in group housing into our search box, you can just punch in this – the length of your walls and the number of cats and it can tell you how many cats you should have in that group housing area. But you could also just do the math yourself and divide by eighteen and it'll give you the number.

Vertical space is great, use it, but it doesn't count. Again, because of that problem, you don't want that to become the living space for the less-dominant cats. You need the floor space. Outdoor space, though, can count as long as the weather's good enough for cats to be able to access that, which in Florida, of course, is pretty much year around, but in most parts of the country, during the time when there's the most housing pressure, which is kitten season, which is summer, you can use outdoor space for group-housed cats.

And that can be a cheap way of expanding your housing areas and your options for cats. And in addition, just great for the welfare of cats to be able to get out, just breathe some fresh air, present to the public what it looks like to have a catio, in case they want to have some safe, protected, fenced outdoor housing at home.

You need to have small enough groups in your group room to have some stability and for the sake of cats' health, the opportunity to have complete turnover. So if you have a group of 30 cats, odds are pretty much every day they're going to be dealing with the introduction and subtraction from their social structure. And every time an animal is added or removed from a group, the social structure changes and they have to renegotiate that just like when a cat is adopted into a home, there's some renegotiation that goes on around that.

So you want to have, ideally, groups of about three to five cats so that you can just adopt down to two or three cats in two groups and then combine those two groups and then clean out a group housing area and start afresh. And I'm going to talk in the second section about some of how to go about actually doing that.

Then here's one where we tend to do pretty well. How many of you are vaccinating on intake? Excellent. We want to a treat for external and internal parasites. We want to do intake screening, make sure we don't have ringworm or something coming in that's going to spread, daily health monitoring, effective safe cleaning and disinfection with a product that is reliable against un-enveloped viruses like calicivirus and panleuk, reasonable protection from disease exposure, isolation and effective treatment, and freedom from stress sufficient to maintain health.

And this is – you know, I'm a veterinarian, so I came from this whole end of the thing. And in some ways, it's just the easy – it's so measurable that it's one of the easier things for us to implement. And here's a shelter that they had a panleuk outbreak and of course, the first thing I asked is, "Well, are you vaccinating on intake?" And they're like, "Yes, absolutely" until they sent me the spreadsheet. And I don't know if you can see that, but here's the intake date, the 2nd, vaccine date, the 10th, 16th to 19th, 22nd to the 1st. And this is all July, August, and September. What was going on there?

Kitten season had overwhelmed their capacity for care. And there was lag time of a few days between intake and vaccination. And the result was a panleukopenia outbreak and kittens that came in healthy being euthanized with panleuk. So maybe the solution is to get your funding agency to give you a giant bag of money so you can hire more staff. Or maybe the solution is just you got to scream louder at the staff. They haven't screamed loud enough.

What's the real issue, though? They just don't have time. And this is a graph that we did for a shelter that was always under attack. Ugh. The cats – you know, cats were being marked feral and then they were calming down and they were never being re-categorized. Vaccines weren't getting done on intake. Cats were sitting, sneezing on the adoption floor and weren't getting moved back to treatment, and, oh, the staff was just awful.

And then we actually counted how many minutes of care they had between the staff members who were responsible for doing cleaning and care. We divided that by the number of cats in the shelter. We found that they had about 120 seconds per cat. So the top of the line is the number of hours they would need to provide adequate care for each cat, fifteen minutes of care for each cat each day, and the orange line is how many hours of time they actually had. So you can see there was always a huge gap.

And then the mustard or diarrhea-colored line at the bottom *[laughs]* is how many minutes of care per cat per day there actually was. So you see at their peak population, then they were down to just about two minutes of

care per day. And they just can't. You put the staff in a no-win situation. It's not only inhumane for the cats. It's inhumane for the people who want to do a good job and can't and eventually might stop trying.

So what can they do about that? They could either increase the number of staff hours or decrease the number of cats or decrease the length of stay for each cat. So this is our shelter now. And I don't know if you can see that little sign there. It says, "One cat, two cages." So we went and cut holes in all the cages in our local shelter so that every cat has two cages. And one thing that did was drop the number of cats in the shelter by half and gave every staff member twice as much time on a per-cat basis.

And this is that shelter where we did the graph at the time. And now with capacity for care with empty space in their adoption area because the cats are flying out of there so fast. And you can just see on her face what it feels like to work within capacity for care.

And then this is the last one. Freedom to express normal behavior. And if you think about what we would choose, this is the one that we tend to choose over all the others. It is our normal species-specific behavior to gather together in clusters at overly air-conditioned conference centers and try to understand better how to care for homeless animals. We really want to do it.

We endure stress, we endure hunger, thirst, discomfort, if there's turbulence, then fear, you know *[laughs]*, in my case, to be here, to do the things that we are born to do. And this is the hardest one to provide. *[Inaudible]* just some of the many things that cats want to do, that they do when they're just allowed the freedom to express their behaviors. Let's not forget the most important one, which is to plot world domination *[Laughs]*. It's one of my species-specific behaviors too *[Laughs]*.

But if you go back and look at the different areas of housing that you have and the opportunities for cats outside of housing, whether that's, you know, some time with a volunteer to get out of the cage and be a lap or explore a room, make a little checklist of what of these behaviors can they do and is there any way you can give them an opportunity to do one more behavior? And the fewer of these behaviors that they can do, that means the harder you need to work to just get your length of stay down.

So as your length of stay goes up, the number of behaviors you need to offer goes up too. So you always have two choices. Get your length of stay down or increase the number of behavioral options. And I know that this is the one we struggle with the most.

Some partial solutions. Lots of toys. Even if the cats don't play with the toys, studies have shown they get more attention from adopters if they have toys. So just put them in there *[Laughs]*. Here's a shelter that's trying so hard, so many different things to enrich the lives of these cats stacked four high. But you know what I'm going to recommend, right? Who can guess what I recommend for this shelter? Cut holes in the top, cut holes in the bottom so that every cat has an up-and-downer.

This is another little study that we did that just showed the percent of time spent in negative neutral and positive behaviors in cages that were portalized or not portalized. And so the amount of time in neutral behaviors was about the same. That was the blue. But look at the difference between the amount of time spent in negative behaviors, red, in the pie that's on your left versus the pie that's on your right. The pie that's on your right is a small cage. The pie that's on your left is a big portalized cage. Not a huge cage. Just a little bit bigger.

And then the figure on your right shows the single most important reason why adopters selected a cat according to another study, which was the behavior of the cat. So we got to have – give the cats the opportunity to do behaviors that encourage adoptions in order to get them out the door.

So again, if you don't have the opportunity to cut holes in your cage as soon as you go home tonight, which I hope you will, or tomorrow if you're staying *[laughs]*, then I also hope you will, here are some partial solutions. So that's a catio on your right, which was just a little porch area that the shelter already had that they just fenced in so that you could take cats outside and give them a little out-of-cage time.

And the other picture is a ferret tower. If I had this to do over again – good, Tricia's keeping me on track for time here – maybe put some visual protection around one corner of that so the cats didn't feel completely exposed. When you're bringing a cat to a place for some out-of-cage time, if you can, bring some bedding with it. If there is a hiding box inside the cage, bring the hiding box with the cat so it can emerge and explore on its own time.

And I just want to point this out. If you just click on this link, and these slides will be loaded so you can download them and get all these live links, then there's a list of conditions for how to provide safe out-of-cage time for cats.

More simple, cheap, accessible solutions. Also gives volunteers and adopters new ways to interact with the cat in addition to just cage side. And this is actually – the picture on your right was in the corner of a URI treatment ward, one of the many things I thought was going to be an utter

fiasco, and I was like, "Oh, you can't do that. You can't let sick cats out of the cage or they're never going to get better. They're going to give it to everybody else."

Well, we now know I was wrong about that, as with many things. They all have the same thing. Don't do this in a veterinary clinic where they come from all different points of the compass with different diseases, but in a shelter, unless there's something extraordinary going on, you have cats with some horrible calicivirus, it's just your background URI, they're all going to get it, they're all going to get the same thing and they can be out of their cage and have a much better time in treatment and actually get better sooner.

And then this is really the best solution of all, right? Is to just not be in a shelter, to be in a home. And this is one of the keys of capacity for care is to minimize the amount of time in a shelter so we don't have to set the bar so high because the cat goes back to its natural environment, whether that's a home or whether that's an outdoor environment to which a community cat is adapted.

So for a long time in sheltering, we felt like giving cats more and more time was going to be the solution. Actually, getting our systems to work really well so that we don't give cats very much time in confinement at all, that's the real answer. Aim for, on average, less than two weeks in the shelter's care for every cat. Less than two weeks. How many of you think you can hit that or are already hitting that? It works really well and that's going to be the subject of the second half of the talk.

And I'm going to close with talking about just one more freedom that didn't make the five freedoms list. And it's not something that we addressed in the "Guidelines for Standards of Care". And that's the freedom to live. And it makes sense that it's not in the five freedoms because this was for animals raised for food. And we didn't address it in the "Guidelines for Standards of Care" because we wanted to set the bar to say, "Whatever the outcome for these animals, wherever the shelter is today in terms of live release, we want the conditions to be humane."

But something that I've learned, you know, an initial concern about the "Guidelines for Standards of Care" was that to provide good welfare, we'd actually save fewer lives, we'd see euthanasia go up. And absolutely, that was unacceptable to us, but we saw as our job as veterinarians, first let's set the bar for welfare. What we have found is that there's incredible synergy between welfare and life release just for the same reason that if your budget isn't balanced, you get more of the good stuff. If you're within your capacity for humane care, you have more success in finding appropriate outcomes for cats over time.

But the other thing is sometimes you have to come at it from the other direction. In a shelter that's still in the position of having to euthanize cats that came in the door healthy, it's almost impossible psychologically to euthanize those cats when they're still healthy. It's such a human instinct to just wait until we have crowding and then treat the URI that occurs as a result of the crowding and then crowd some more until some cats are so sick that we have to euthanize them or until we have a ringworm outbreak or a panleukopenia outbreak.

And I can preach against that all I want 'til I'm blue in the face, but until we have the feeling that we have appropriate outcomes for the cats, it's really hard to shut the door on intake or make decisions about euthanasia when we think that that's going to – even though we realize that doesn't change the overall intake and outcome balance, we feel like it's going to make us have to make decisions about healthy animals. So I'm happy to entertain questions about that. But for some shelters, getting the numbers in balance is the foundation for providing capacity for care.

For some shelters, providing capacity for care frees up enough resources to get the number in balance. And for many shelters, it's a dialogue. You make a few improvements to capacity for care. You put in curtains, you put in beds. It make your length of stay get shorter. It makes the cats stay healthier. And live release goes up a little bit and that gives you some home. And it frees up some of your vet's time, and so she has time to sterilize a cat for sterilize, neuter and return program. And that makes things just a little bit better.

And then someone has time to spend time on the phone with somebody arguing about whether they should bring that cat in or whether they can rehome it themselves or keep it. And so it's a dialogue. And so don't feel overwhelmed. These are things that can go in a really stepwise fashion and that feed on each other. And for so long, we've been caught in a vicious cycle of being over capacity and having compromised conditions for care and having that compromise our ability for live release.

But just like that South Peace Shelter I told you about in the beginning, once you get the cycle rolling the other way, it rolls faster and faster and faster and it starts feeding on itself.

So that really brings me to the end of this section, conveniently enough. And now I'm going to take fifteen minutes for questions. And in the second section, I'm going to talk about really the nitty-gritty of how to get to capacity for care *[Applause]*. And I'm – thank you. Why, thank you *[Applause]*.

And I don't know. Is there a rule about questions? Like, do you have to rush up and grab that rock star microphone?

Question: [Inaudible]

Dr. Kate Hurley: Okay, rush up and grab the rock star microphone, folks. And I really – I so welcome questions or even just comments. Does this feel overwhelming? Does it feel exciting? Are you already there? Are you going to take the next hour and a half off because you're so awesome [Laughs]? Yeah.

Question: Good afternoon. Good afternoon, doctor. Before anything, I have to say I feel so much respect for everything you said. That's incredible.

Dr. Kate Hurley: Thank you.

Question: But I need your help or we need your help. Uh, I come from Miami Dade Animal Services.

Dr. Kate Hurley: Uh-huh.

Question: We are trying to go no-kill. We have implemented a TNG/TNR program. We have a problem. If you go into our cat rooms, you have mainly four-to eight-week-old kittens. All the cages are full. After we go through our daily rounds and everything, we pull the ones that are sick and everything, we continue to have full rooms of kittens. We have our occasional panleukopenia here, panleukopenia there. We try to manage as best as possible. We have tried to reduce our euthanasia rate, which is very difficult for us because at what moment or where do you draw the line?

What do you do in order to provide a standard of care that's adequate for those kittens? At what moment do you decide that their length of stay is too long? When you have – we are an open intake shelter. Cats coming in every day in humongous amounts, and we really are like, "What do we do? What is the best option?" If you have, for example, we have foster programs also and so sometimes the foster that comes back has panleuk, but their brothers are still in the shelter and things like that.

So we are like, "What do we do?" And it's not a daily basis, we don't have a panleuk outbreak, we don't have a URI outbreak, but we have the concern from how do we manage this the best way possible? In what moment do we say, "You are healthy, we have to pull you anyway because we have 60, 50, 100 cats coming in"? What do we do? We are pulling our hair out. We don't know what to do.

Dr. Kate Hurley:

So I'm also happy to talk more during the break, because I want to make sure there's time for a few questions, and that's a big one. But just sort of, like, the big, like, "What do we do? And what do we do about kittens?" Remember, it has nothing to do with whether you have 50 or 100 or 500 or 1,000 kittens in your shelter. The problem is that 5,000, 8,000, 10,000 kittens are being born in your community and coming to your shelter. And that right now that's more than the number of cats that are being snapped up by either adopters or by rescue partners.

So you have still an imbalance between the incoming arrow and the outgoing arrow. You're not earning as much as you're spending. And the solution to that partly is – and, you know, this is exactly the same situation that we went through with our own shelter.

When we cut those holes in our cages, when we portalized everything, we were – we had no foster program and we were euthanizing hundreds of kittens every summer. Portalizing the cages, dropping the daily care load on staff, improving the health of the adult cats was part of what it took to free up the bandwidth to create a foster program so that last season just one litter of under-age kittens was euthanized down from hundreds. Hopefully, this season it'll be zero.

So that is, you know, like, portalize your cages, yada, yada, yada, you'll be no kill [*Laughs*]. Of course, it does not really work like that, but part of what you have to realize is that if you're spending more than you earn, there's not an easy solution to that. Eventually, you're going to have to pay off the bill. If you're admitting more kittens than you currently have the capacity to send out to foster or adequately care for or find homes for or transfer out in a reasonable period of time, then you're still in the position right now of making hard decisions about euthanasia.

What I would urge you to do is think about how much control you really do have over that intake arrow. And I've been kind of surprised. When staff has a little bit more time and some freedom and some flexibility and encouragement to use resources to think about, like, "If the result of a litter of four-week-old kittens coming in is going to be overcrowding and euthanasia of that litter or some other litter or sickness or something is over your capacity, is it really the best thing for that litter of kittens to come in?" Maybe not.

We have always assumed that it is, but actually, we can take the time to talk to someone, and I was just talking to someone at a shelter that up until last year had a euthanasia rate of over 90 percent for cats, in rough shape, part of the police department in a lousy old building, and I talked to their dispatcher and she was just looking for some encouragement.

When someone comes with a litter of kittens, can she tell them to do something else? And I said, "Heck yeah. Tell them to do something else. Give them some guidelines." Just like we say, "Don't bring a baby bird in. You know, watch, and make sure it really is abandoned."

And what she did she figured out, you know – the dispatcher found her resources on how to bottle feed kittens and she made it into her fourth-grade class' project and they're bottle feeding the kittens. And so sometimes we just need the time, staff needs the time answering the phones or out in the field to say, "No, don't bring that litter in here. It's above our capacity for care. We're not going to earn enough to pay for that this month."

And so even though it's worrisome to us to leave them out there in the community, it still might be better. They might have better chances to survive and thrive if we wait and say, "Here. Here's how to take care of them in your backyard until they're eight weeks old and they're old enough for adoption. And maybe then we can give you some resources to rehome them on your own. Maybe we can give you some supplies and you can become an unwilling foster parent for these kittens that you just found *[Laughs]*." And that would cost us less and also be less sad for us than having them come in and we can't care for them and we get panleuk and we end up euthanizing them.

So there are options, but it's partly just opening the door to say – to things like saying, "Yeah, don't bring 'em in today", even though it does worry us. Any more questions?

Question: You had something up there about vaccinating every two weeks until they're twenty weeks of age. Is that right?

Dr. Kate Hurley: Every two weeks while they're in the shelter's care until they're twenty weeks of age. As long as they're in a clean foster home where there's only one litter, then we can drop that out to three to four weeks. But in the shelter where disease pressure is constant, yeah, we want to jam that vaccine into them at the shortest, safe interval, which is two weeks. In that same shelter where you're so worried about disease that you're vaccinating them every two weeks, I beg of you don't keep them in the shelter from four weeks *[laughs]* to twenty weeks of age. Send 'em out into a clean foster home where we can go there every three- to four-week interval, but still do vaccinate all the way out to the last vaccine at twenty weeks of age.

We now understand that that final vaccine is very important. One, they might have been born to a mother who, herself, survived panleukopenia and had a massive amount of antibodies to give to her kittens and it's not

going to be until a slightly older age that we can actually break through those antibodies and protect the kittens. Two, we don't always know how old cats are when they come to us and so instead of going with our guess, let's just go on the safe side, give 'em a last vaccine, twenty weeks of age. That's probably going to protect them for at least years if not the rest of their lives against panleukopenia, the most important disease.

Great. Well, you're welcome to bombard me with – oh, one more?

Question: Dr. Hurley, I'd like to thank, you know, not only myself, but everybody here, all your work that you've done with the specialty of shelter medicine and co-authoring and the guidelines and all that stuff. Just really appreciate you being such a leader.

Dr. Kate Hurley: It's so awesome. Isn't it? It's like, we have a specialty. I can't hardly believe it.

Question: – since you're *[inaudible]* take on big projects like this – it's not a simple question, but I think what there – there's a need for essential communication between the different shelters not only maybe as far as standards like private practice has Ah-Ha or something like that communication maybe as far as cost of daily housing and, you know, just having basic operating numbers like that, but more importantly, like, the lady before said that there was so many kittens that she didn't know what to do. And in the Chicago area, for three months we had no kittens.

So if there's some type of central communication – now we have a lot, but *[laughs]*, you know, from January to March. And I understand, you know, the season of it all, but I think that there's times where we need dogs or we need cats. And we're definitely focused on Chicago, but there might be times where if we had some type of central communication, and I don't know how we would go about that, but that if somebody had a lot of dogs and we had a lot of cats that we – and somebody needed cats, somebody needed dogs, that we can kind of work more together.

And also, just as far as practices, that instead of everybody reinventing the wheel as far as what we do, I mean, Florida and California have been excellent as far as providing, you know, basic, consistent information as far as intake and protocols and things like that, but just as far as how you do things, I think it's just, I can learn from other shelters and other shelters can learn from me.

Dr. Kate Hurley: Well, I will pay you your bonus later *[laughs]* because you gave me the perfect lead-in to what I'm going to finish the second hour with. Thank you *[applause]*. So I hope you all will come back. And those of you who already are here, have reached the capacity for care, are providing the five

freedoms, have balanced intake and outcome, I would love to hear from you and how you went about it. Thank you. And you'll turn me off, right? So you won't have to hear me going to the bathroom and cursing *[laughs]*, dropping my iPhone in the toilet *[audio ends]*.

[End of audio]