



Maddie's Institute

Cats and Capacity for Care, Part 2

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Video Transcript

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Dr. Kate Hurley: Look. My slides are up. Hello everybody. We're back. Hope you had a good break. So part two. This is a spreadsheet from the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, which is looking at capacity of Canadian shelters. So it was interesting looking at it on a national scale like that, but sort of it's getting down to the nitty-gritty now of how much income do we need to earn? How much is enough to get the good stuff that we want?

So first of all, we need to think about what kind of capacity do you want? And, you know, holding capacity, and this is a great illustration of how cats fill all available space [*laughs*], or flow-through capacity. Here's a cat who wants to flow through the situation as quickly as possible [*Laughs*]. Raise your hand if you prefer holding capacity. Would you rather be able to hold 500 cats or move 500 cats? Move, right?

But typically, our shelters are designed to hold the maximum numbers, not designed as lean, mean cat-moving machines. That's what we're going to talk about now, how to turn our shelters from holding machines to flow machines. So here we come to Algebra, and I'm here to tell you I did not pass even enough math to actually get into vet school and I'm hoping nobody will notice retroactively [*Laughs*].

But we know capacity is a function of number of cats in times how long each cat stays. Right? If you take 100 cats in and they each stay a day, similar to taking 10 cats in and they each stay 10 days. Now, obviously, you're going to need more than a day to sort things out for a lot of cats, but maybe you can have less than ten days.

So if you're trying to deal with adjusting capacity, you can either increase your physical and staff ability to provide care or you can decrease your intake or you can decrease your length of stay. Which of those is free and least likely to enrage the public [*Laughs*]? We want to do all we can with decreasing length of stay because decreasing length of stay also has benefits for the animals themselves.

It decreases the amount of time they're in confinement and increases their ability to cope with whatever they do have to deal with. It lowers our costs on a per-animal basis. So we want to make sure we're doing everything we can with length of stay before we start fooling around with intake or physical and staff capacity increases.

So length of stay, super important. Let's talk about it. Length of stay in itself has a huge effect on length of stay. So a longer length of stay tends to promote a yet longer length of stay. It's the single greatest risk factor for disease. This is true for both dogs and cats. So you all know the feeling if a cat stays seven, ten, fourteen days in a lot of shelters, it's eventually going to start sneezing. So if we let the cat stay long enough, then we're going to have it sneezing, then it's going to have another two weeks' length of stay in treatment.

Length of stay also increases the risk for chronic stress. So a cat that initially on placement in the adoption room is social and outgoing and putting his little arms out of the cage and purring at everyone, but doesn't get adopted in the first week or two, some cats can get really discouraged and depressed and withdrawn. And then they're just sitting there, they're sitting in a group room with their back to everybody, they're not trying anymore. And so that becomes a risk factor for a yet longer length of stay.

Every day a length of stay takes at least a little time and costs at least a little and so it bites into our resources to provide for the other things that we want to do. And conversely, decreasing length of stay reduces disease, it lowers stress for animals and staff, and it reduces cost. And then you can reinvest all of that to further decrease length of stay, to get animals on the "Interwebs" faster, to promote animals more aggressively, to meet their needs more specifically and further move them through the system.

Now, there's one factor, other than length of stay in itself that has a huge effect on length of stay. If you're housing is working against you, you're really going to struggle to take your length of stay down to the minimum that otherwise could be achieved. So this is a study that we did that some of you have seen. We compared upper respiratory infection rates in nine shelters across North America of a wide variety of types, management styles, sizes, budgets.

We looked at 49 factors, including vaccination, disinfection, exposure to dogs, volunteers, handling practices and cage size, and we found the single greatest protective factor, the single thing associated with reducing the risk of URI most powerfully, in fact, the only thing that came out significant was cage size greater than 8 square feet of floor space in single-

compartment housing and compartmentalized cages so that cats didn't have to be handled and move extensively for daily care.

So housing has a profound effect on disease risk. And by reducing disease risk, decreases length of stay very substantially. Same study led us to evaluate the effect of housing on stress. Because feline upper respiratory infection is so closely tied to stress, it makes sense that housing that's protective against stress is also protective against upper respiratory infection.

So in this graph, you can see the green and red lines are the cat's stress score when they came in the door and that is well above stressed. That's right up into terrified territory [*laughs*] on average. So that blue line is the dividing line between stressed and relaxed. No significant difference between the groups when they were admitted. But look what happened. Where the green line crosses from stressed to relaxed is on day two, on average in a cage that's just got the eight square feet of floor space and compartmentalization.

Whereas cats in the smaller cages didn't cross that line, on average, all the way out to day seven. Might have been some fine adoptable cats in that group, but they weren't showing it, on average. And so that in itself was decreasing – increasing the length of stay as we tried to figure out, “What's going on with you? Can we put you up for adoption? Are you a candidate for shelter, neuter, and return?” This is a shelter that had a big transfer program, but the cats had to be really friendly to qualify for transfer so we couldn't figure that out.

And then of course, what happened by day seven? They're sneezing. So off they go into isolation into another small cage. So housing has a profound effect on stress and length of stay and we also know that adopters respond to friendly, active behavior. There are adopters who respond in – with pity to a fearful, stressed-out cat, but most adopters that come in the door they're just looking for a straightforward cat that's going to reach its little hand through the bars, clutch them by the shirt and say, “Take me home [*Laughs*].” And cats can do that when they're not feeling too stressed.

Housing and staff time and length of time. So here's a double-compartment cage and there's a little divider there and time to clean. You just shoosh the cat to one side, hold it into that compartment, tidy up the other side, shoosh the cat over, change the litterbox. You're done. The cat doesn't leap out of the cage and escape, you don't have to chase it around, you don't get fur all over you, there's no carrier you have to clean.

So that reduces the time for daily care. And when staff has less time spent on daily care, more time to interact with adopters, promote the animals for adoption, reach out to the community, help decrease intake and all the things that we need to do to solve the problem in the long term.

And now here's where we come to the really surprising part of all of this. Just decreasing the number of cats that can possibly be housed at any one time by improving the quality of housing and dropping the amount of cats per unit of space in itself has perhaps the most profound effect on length of stay.

So all of those benefits on length of stay of improving health and releasing stress and all of that, those are great, but the most profound benefit is just having less cats in the building because you can't fit as many when you set your bar higher for how much space they each need.

So let's look at two lines for Starbucks. I spend a lot of time in airports. I spend a lot of time worrying about the length of the line in the Starbucks. Let's say there's 40 people in the line in the picture on your left. And let's say there's one server serving one person a minute and, on average, intake and outflow is balanced. One person adds to the line every minute. How long are people going to wait in line? Forty minutes. Even if you put chairs in the line and give people glasses of white wine to drink while they're waiting, it's still going to take 40 minutes to get from the back to the front.

Even if you go and, like, grab somebody from the back of the line and randomly serve them because they seem less hostile because they haven't been waiting as long, still, on average, it's going to take 40 minutes to get through the line. If you were serving everybody at random, everyone in the line would have a one in forty chance of being served. Does that make sense?

Now here's another line. There's one person in line. This person is serving one person a minute. One person is adding to the line every minute. How long is everyone going to wait? One minute, whether they sit in a chair or stand on their head. They're going to wait a minute.

If the server at the Starbucks with the short line goes to the bathroom for ten minutes and so for ten minutes people come in and they don't go out, how long the when he comes back will the line take? Ten minutes. Forever more, right? Until he serves ten more people than come in. Until he closes the door of the Starbucks or gets a friend to come in and help him, steal the poor person – they're overwhelmed over at the Starbucks at the airport. Maybe they want to just come help at his Starbucks for a little while.

So just dropping the number of cats, waiting for an outcome magically resets the time it take to provide that outcome if intake and outcomes then go back into balance as, in the long-run, they always need to do. And by a happy coincidence, fewer higher-quality housing units means fewer cats waiting for an outcome, and then it means they wait less time for that outcome.

So decreasing the number in line just once, pushing, getting more people out of the line than enter the line is the single most powerful way to decrease how long the line takes. Brilliant, right? Pretty good for somebody that didn't pass ninth-grade Algebra [*Laughs*].

So there's a lot to the five freedoms. There's a lot to capacity for care. Start with housing. Start with getting your housing numbers right. And this is exactly what the BC SPCA did in that email that I showed at the beginning. The standard at that time was eleven square feet of floor space. Now we know you can get away with just nine, but make sure that it's compartmentalized.

In communal housing, this is one of the easiest places to start. Go home, do the math. If there's more hats per group room, than one per eighteen square feet, when one is adopted out, don't add one until you get down to your new level. Just like when one person leaves the line, don't add one until you get down to your new level, and then you serve many more cats over time. Just by rebalancing it once, you serve many more.

So this – now, to go back, actually, they wrote this up. So I was able to learn a little bit more about how it all worked. So first of all, they calculated how many cats would be their ideal number to have in line so that they could serve the cats, do everything they need to do, prepare their coffee, mix in the caramel latte macchiato, whatever it was that they needed to do, spay, neuter, behavior evaluation, plenty of time to settle down, time to be up for adoption on a weekend when someone was going to come in the door and want that cat. But not more than that. Not too many cats in line so that it takes more than a week for the cat to get to the front.

They started putting healthy strays straight into adoption. Not many of them were reclaimed, so the cats could actually be viewed by adopters and chosen by adopters while they were going through their stray hold period. So that instantly dropped their length of stay. They eased their response to sneezing cats. So they had had a one-sneeze rule where they would put them back into this horrible isolation chamber, and then they would get really sick back there.

With fewer cats, they were better able to monitor, “Is that cat really sick or did it just sneeze a couple times because it got a piece of litter in its nose?” And then they portalized or they opened existing portals and they dropped the numbers in their group rooms. And they did it by a variety of means. By short-term managing intake, by making a bigger push for adoption, by transferring some cats to another organization. So different ways. And we’ll talk about how to do it.

And you can go to this link. And that reminds me to say I know that this whole lecture’s going to be available for a video eventually, so hi out there in video land [*Laughs*]. But I can make these slides available on sheltermedicine.com at the end of today. I can upload them. Or at least by the end of this week. So if you want to get these slides and these live links so that you can investigate these resources further, I’m happy to do that. So let’s just assume if you type Florida into the search box at sheltermedicine.com by the end of the week, I will have these up for you? All right? Unless there’s some other solution that the conference will email you about.

So here is the BC SPCA, the Vancouver branch before C for C. So you can see, you know, fairly large cages, actually, 36 inches across. And hide, perch and go and the raised food and water dishes. So doing a lot of things right. And then this is one of the things that’s really important is engage the community. Tell them why you’re doing it. Tell them how important it is. Tell ‘em it’s exciting, even if it means that you’re going to slow down intake for a couple of weeks. Tell them what it’s going to mean that you’re going to be able to serve the community even better over time.

And so here’s what it looked like after. Again, it’s not amazing, it’s not a palace. It’s just two cages per cat instead of one. And had success with that, saw their length of the stay drop, saw their upper respiratory infection drop so that they used to have between ten and twelve cats in isolation at any one time, they had ten to twelve cats in isolation during the year. Ten to twelve cats total.

So they spread it and this was some of the feedback that they got. All of this they told me just incidentally way later, and I was like, “Really? Holy cow.” This was from the head veterinarian. And this was so poignant because it spoke to not only experience of the cat, but the experience of what it’s like to be in a shelter that’s providing for the needs of cats.

“I know our shelters and most of the staff well. Within seconds of walking in and without asking questions or looking at animals, I can tell if they’re practicing C for C simply by reading the staff and reflecting back to what they were like prior to C for C. I can actually feel the reduction in

their stress due to them having the time to properly provide for the animals.”

“Very rare to have URI.” “Cats are more relaxed and healthy.” These are all from different shelters. “Staff is less stressed.” “Overwhelming success.” “Adoption rate is way up.” “Cats are happier and more adoptable.” All these theories that I had now coming into play. “Best thing I’ve seen happen for cats.” “Adoption’s up twenty-two percent.” “Less stress for animals and staff.”

So again, less cats, less work, more adoptions, more people served, more for your community. Some of these shelters actually increased their intake because they were able to rehome more cats. So why not? “Almost doubled our adoption rate.” “Much larger number, finding homes faster.” “Love this program.” “Adoption’s up thirteen percent.” “Cats are so happy, they don’t stay long.” “Length of stay is down by over 50 percent.” “Euthanasia down fifteen percent.” “Length of stay decreased by an amazing 63 percent.” “Adoptions up, sicknesses down.” “Staff have more time.” “Everyone is less stressed.” “Euthanasia down 40 percent.” “We can now take in more surrenders and strays.”

Yeah. Hopefully, you’re all fired up to do this. Here’s the math behind the magic. Every shelter every month had to look at their budget. They had to say, “How many intakes can we expect? How long can we expect them to stay? How many adoptions can we expect? And how many cats should we allow to get in line for adoption so that we can move them through within our capacity for care?”

Just, like, at the beginning of the month say, “How much do I think I’m going to earn? How much am I going to spend based on that?” So without even fooling around with numbers or math, if you’re current length of stay is about twenty-one days or more, you can almost certainly portalize and drop your group rooms to capacity and see your adoption rate increase. You don’t need to do anything different and it’s not going to be a big challenge.

If your current length of stay is shorter than that, let’s get out the calculators because it might be a little bit tight. You might actually need to increase the number of housing units available so that you can make sure that you can still get all that care that every cat needs done in a timely way. And especially if you’re a smaller shelter and there are some kinds of care that are needed, but that you only have, like, once a week, like, you only have spay and neuter services once or twice a week and so if cats don’t make it for the Tuesday that that is there, they got to wait a whole ‘nother week. Sometimes you got to push out to a little bit further.

Your overall capacity for care. We already went over this. How many cats will come in each day? How long will each cat stay? Not how long do they stay now because that's driven by the housing and the number that already happen to be in line. But how long would they stay, ideally, to get the care they need and get an appropriate outcome? And that's your recommended capacity that you need to be able to aim for. So if you don't have that many humane housing units that many spots in group rooms, then you need to raise that.

But if that number is lower than the number of cats you actually house, you'll do better even if all your housing is humane by having less cats in the building at any one time. So for instance, if in January intake is low, better to just have the cats that are coming in still move through in a short time, because adoptions are usually low too, and not fill your housing all the way up because if you fill your housing all the way up, you're going to get a long line and cats are going to end up staying a long time, maybe longer than you can provide care for.

Hopefully that makes sense. I know we're supposed to hold questions to the end, but this is getting into kind of tricky math territory, so do shoot your hand up if this just isn't making sense to you. This – yeah, we got a hand shot up.

Question: [Inaudible]

Dr. Kate Hurley: So the question is what if you can't stop intake? This is not about stopping intake. This is about setting your bar for in between intake and outcome, how many cats are you going to have at once? For all the cats that are brought in, how long will each one stay? And making sure the conditions in the shelter support that ideal length of stay. So there are shelters that have implemented capacity for care with absolutely no change and no control over intake.

So you'll need to do something to bring the population into balance. If you have 50 cats and 30 would be more ideal, at some point, you'll have to figure out a way to get from 50 to 30, but that doesn't mean you have to do it by limiting intake. You could do it by having a special adoption promotion. You could adopt out one extra cat every week for twenty weeks, and that's – some shelters took a year or more to get to capacity for care. So lots of different ways to do this, but it's not predicated on being able to manage intake. Yeah?

Question: [Inaudible]

Dr. Kate Hurley: And the question is, is there a kit? And we are working and if you know somebody who either, um, makes molds, injection molds for plastic or

know someone who wants to fund this, it costs about \$25,000.00. Hopefully, you can edit that out for those of you out there in TV land because we'll have this already, but talk to me afterwards. We're working on having a premade portal available for you that have – has a little door you can lock. So if you get into an emergency, you get a hoarding situation, just, like, one week of kitten season is the worst week ever, you can drop those portals and go right back to the hell of cats in tiny little cages, but just for a week to get you through.

Or if you're going to – you know you're going to have a huge adoption event on the weekend and you want to start stockpiling cats a couple days ahead of time, you can still do it. And then most of the time you open the portals and you provide adequate care. Right now the process – I'll just tell you this now, even though I have a link to it. It's available. You have to cut pipe to make the portals. Um, and there's different ways that people have done it, but we do have detailed directions on our website and I have a link to it later in the presentation.

So partly this is a leap of faith is to trust me. Shelters that have come to capacity for care, you can move through cats in fourteen days or less overall from intake to adoption. Yeah, another desperate question. And then I know I'm going to have to move on. Yeah?

Question: [Inaudible]

Dr. Kate Hurley: I'm going to show you how to do – how to work back from adoptions and work forward from intake because there's really two sides. Part of the equation is how many cats do you intake? And that's your pre-adoption holding. That drives your pre-adoption holding capacity. Because whether they get adopted out or have another outcome, and that's not necessarily euthanasia, it might be transfer, it might be offsite adoption, it might be off to foster care and then they adopt out of foster care, it might be shelter, neuter, return, you got to make sure you're providing for that whole group.

And then there are – for most shelters, there's going to be a – subgroup moving forward into adoption or an expectation that adoption will be the outcome for that. And the size of that group is driven by the number of adoptions. So we're going to approach it from two different directions. There's two equations we need to do. And I do have an Excel spreadsheet on sheltermedicine.com to help you do this if you're not super into doing the math.

And also, remember you can just do the math. You can find out what your ideal number is. You can just say, "If every cat stayed fourteen days, if every cat stayed in pre-adoption seven days or five days, here's how many

would be our perfect number.” Then you don’t have to get there right away. You just contemplate that for a while and then maybe, you know, get there by ones and twos or a half dozen at a time. Or get there in one fell swoop and then see how it feels to be there. And if it doesn’t feel good, fill it back up again.

So three things that you need to count, and you want to count on a month-by-month basis for cats. This all works for dogs too and it’s actually easier because dogs don’t have as seasonal of a pattern for most shelters. But for cats, on a monthly basis. Try doing it for June. How many cats will come in? How many cats will go out overall? And how many cats will be adopted?

The reason you want to do adoptions as part of outcomes is because for cats, during some times of year, like, right now we’re starting to take in all the kittens, but they’re not having an outcome because they’re young, and so we’re sending them to foster care. And so adoptions might be very small as a proportion of intake right now because all those kittens are going to foster care. But as a proportion of final outcomes, they’re going to reflect what’s more likely really going on. Make sense?

Think about – this is exactly how the BC SPCA did it. Think about what happened last year and what happened two years ago to get average. And it’s kind of, like, predicting what your income’s going to be and predicting what your expenses are going to be. So for instance, for intake at this shelter, this sample shelter, two years ago they took in 40 adults and 25 kittens. Last year they took in 31 adults and 18 kittens. And so the average was 36 and 22.

And now they can start to plan. We’re going to probably take in 36 cats and 22 kittens this month. We can divide that by the number of days of the month and know how many cats are going to come in, on average, each day. You can just take the average or you can look at that and see if you think there’s a pattern there. Notice that the number admitted went down for both categories.

Maybe they started a spay/neuter program and they’ve seen it go down every month. This year compared to last year. So maybe you put your expected a little bit optimistically and make it 35 and 20, think it’s going to actually go down a little bit from the average. Or maybe it seems like it’s fluctuating randomly, and then you just use the average. But the first thing you want to do is get your predicted intake number. What’s your expected intake for the coming month? So you can decide what your capacity for care pre-adoption, hold housing needs to be.

Then this is kind of a tricky thing, but we don't want to think about this monthly. We want to think about this daily because we can say cats coming in per day times how many days they will spend. And that's going to give us our number for how many cats should be in the building. Make sense? So you take the number that came in during the month and then you divide it by the number of days in the month. Truth is you don't have to remember how many days there are in a month. You just can divide by 30.5 and that gives you a pretty good average. Right?

So you could, you know, just looking at this pattern, you can see in January there was three cats coming in a day. If you're trying to get a twenty-day length of stay and you have three cats coming in a day, then you're going to want to plan for 60 cats in a shelter. But in July there was ten cats coming in a day, so either you're going to have to drop your planned length of stay or you're going to have to have 10 times 20, 200 cats in the shelter. See how that's a helpful way to think about it once you break it down by how many cats will come in each day? And then how many days will they stay?

If you don't want to do this for every single month, just got back to last year, start by dividing the total by 365. That gets your average for the year. And then go back to last year and look at what was your worst month? What was your highest intake? And look at your best month for adoption. What was your highest adoption? And those are the highest numbers you possibly ever have to hit. So just think about that. How could we do that? How could we adjust our housing so that we could accomplish that?

So then what are the different areas of capacity for care? The only two I'm going to talk about, because they're the two that really drive the – most of the shelter machine, is pre-adoption or hold housing. That's any housing where the cats aren't actively available and viewable for adoption. They need something to happen, whether they need to complete the stray hold or they need surgery or a physical exam or whatever it is, they're not ready to go yet. How long will that take? And often times that actually happens in a separate area for many shelters.

It doesn't mean you couldn't have some of that take place in an adoption room if you decide that's a good idea like the BC SPCA did, but you want to think about how many cats will be in that state of not ready for adoption? And you want to think about making sure the housing is appropriate to that. Sometimes that housing is not as important for it to be glamorous or cool looking for the public. It doesn't need to be shaped like a little cat townhouse, but it still needs to be good. That's driven by intake.

Then, as suggested, adoptions, work backwards. So that's cats that are actively available, waiting for adoption. Some of them might wait for a long time, some of them might wait for a short time, but you want to think about how, on average, how long do you want the line to be for them to wait? So that's adoptions. Monthly, daily average adoptions times your target length of stay to adoption.

Anything we can do about that? She I just stop wandering? All right. Sorry about that, people. Now I'm just going to mention – this isn't in the calculations, but treatment capacity for care. When a shelter is at capacity for care, you can predict that shelter-acquired disease is going to be less than ten percent of the population, often substantially less.

So if you're looking at your building and, like, it's really tight for you to actually portalize cages, think about the fact that you might be able to steal some cages from an isolation and treatment housing if currently you're having cats spend a lot of time there. You can just bypass treatment entirely and get them moving on through to adoption. So consider that as one of your options.

And then special project capacity for care. That's not driven by intake, it's not driven by adoptions. It's driven by the shelter's ability to deliver services. And that's the cats that aren't actively on a path to adoption. They're on a little byway. You decided you were – things are going so good you're going to help other shelters who can't deal with ringworm. You're going to bring in cats with ringworm and you're going to treat them until they are better. And their length of stay is going to be two months in their ringworm ward, and that's fine because you know it. That's separate from your flow-through capacity for care.

Orphan kitten nursery is another good example. If cats are onsite, but they're not part of the flow-through. If you have something like you house pets for victims of domestic violence, that would be another example of special project, capacity for care. You want to think about that in terms of staffing, but you don't need to do any math around that.

So first of all, let's think about what length of stay will we aim for, for pre-adoption hold? Because usually, we just get the length of stay we get and what often happens is cats kind of get jammed up in pre-adoption hold because adoption is jammed up. You know, the line is long and the line is long to move from pre-adoption into adoption, and the line is long to move from adoption into a home. Make sense?

And so we'll see that there is a long length of stay, but it's not driven by what the cat needs. It's driven by how many have gotten into the system already. So in terms of legal hold, if you have any discretion over this,

legal hold to a live outcome for a cat that's nothing or as short as possible really advantageous for cats and cat health. So by all means, hold cats with identification as long as you like because there's not that many of 'em.

But cats that come in without ID, the very best thing we can do is just hustle them through the system to a live outcome. And then hope that we have live outcomes for most cats for whom it's appropriate. And go ahead and hold euthanasia with as much caution as is appropriate to make sure that's really the right choice and the only choice for that cat.

Time for evaluation. You know what? If they're friendly, move 'em right along. They're not going to get friendlier by holding them in a cage. If they're shy, make sure that the housing is adequate to support development of friendly behavior and expression of friendly behavior and hold them just until they display that.

If you're thinking about needed services, spay/neuter being the big one, of course, think about, "Well, do you have to get that done before they're available for adoption? Could you make them available and then have that done before they go home or send them offsite if that's what you do and then the adopter picks them up?" So think about if those are a barrier, A, "Is there a way you can get it done more frequently?" Or B, "Is there a way you could continue them moving through the system?"

No wait for vaccines, in general. Maximum you want to mess around with is waiting for three days for vaccines to fully kick in. After that, it doesn't get any better. So no waiting for a week, two weeks. Re-vaccination, just move them on through. That's the best thing you can do. And then another thing to consider is time for transfer or transport. So if you're a small agency and you are reliant on transport, say, for kittens to another organization, they can only come on weekends or they only come twice a month, one, can you send 'em out to foster care while they're waiting for that transport? Two, can you make transport happen more frequently? Can you get more volunteers? Or three, build that into a longer length of stay as your last choice.

So this is why length of stay pre-adoption should be no more than seven days, on average, and often times can be quite a bit lower. So – and that's a little sign. It says, "Medical says, 'Move me up.'" Because one of the most important things you can do is just chase people around to keep cats moving through the system.

This may be too much to get into in a lecture this size, and I am happy to have this feedback afterwards, but I just wanted to talk a little bit about weighted averages because you hear seven days and you're like, "Oh, you

know, that's – that might be tight.” But, you know, if you think about the way the weighted averages work is it's the percent of animals times the number of days for that category of animals. So here's an example where strays – say this shelter has a seven-day stray hold. And so – and then you need another day after the stray hold is out – is over to get it together, get the cat evaluated, get it spayed/neutered, and move out to adoption.

So the length of stay is eight days for strays, but there's only 50 percent. So you actually only contribute four days to the overall length of stay. Similarly, here's a shelter that has ten percent confiscates, and that's a really long hold of twenty-one days. But because it's a fairly small percent, it only contributes two days to the overall length of stay. Whereas these ferals, they're getting S&R'd really quickly, they're out in three days, so they're only contributing about half a day to the overall length of stay. So the sum total average length of stay is seven days.

So you can do that for the cats that are coming through. If you have some cats that move straight to foster care, for instance, on the day they come in, they contribute zero days to the length of stay. And so often times you do this math and you find out, “Wow, actually, the length of stay we should hit is three days or five days.” So an important exercise. And I have a calculator that's available online as part of this where you can just enter the animals into this – into these categories and it'll calculate the percentages and the weighted average for you.

That ideal length of stay to adoption, this is the part that most commonly blows people's minds. Seven to ten days. No more as your overall average. How many of you does that make a little anxious? All right. You're with me. Excellent. A few. A few tentative hands raised *[Laughs]*. Go for the longer end if they are not visible pre-adoption. They're just really held back away from the public. And if you're a very small shelter. So in small shelters, for one thing, just the fluctuation is greater where you'll have one Saturday where nobody shows up and another Saturday where lots of people show up.

Whereas for a larger shelter, you know, if it's 50 adopters or 70 adopters that show up, the variation isn't as dramatic. A seven-day length of stay means that, on average, everybody gets the opportunity to be viewable for a weekend. To really drop it, if your shelter is small and your housing is tight, in order for you to be able to provide that double-sided housing, really think hard about things like foster returns and intake.

So if you know you've got big adoptions on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, time your foster returns, time your friendly owner surrenders to come in on Thursday or come in on Wednesday if they need to be – have surgery on Thursday so they're up Friday and Saturday and then they're gone by

Sunday. So that's another way you can manage your length of stay to be even shorter.

And absolutely not a time limit. It doesn't mean that some cats won't stay six months or a year, but what you're doing is you're making the cats that could move faster, move as fast as they can, so they can free up good quality time and space for the cats that really need it, for the giantly obese, fluffy, FIV-positive cat, that it's not going to be an adopter coming in every Saturday that wants him. So really important, not a time limit. It's an average to aim for.

And this is the magic of weighted averages. This is why it seems – it can seem really impossible. Truth is most cats coming into shelters actually can move quickly. They don't have a lot of barriers up to adoption. And you put 'em up for adoption and they're cute and they're purring and they're friendly and they're making muffins in their cage, on pretty much the first Saturday they're up, they get out of there as long as they're housed in an environment that presents them in an attractive way.

So say 75 percent of your cats are kittens are very friendly adults or sort of distinctive breeds that turn over in three days and 25 percent are low – slow track and they actually take about three weeks to move through. That still means you hit an average length of stay of seven. And then if you walk into that shelter, what you'll see is 69 percent slow-track cats on the adoption floor and only about 30 percent fast-track cats on the adoption floor. So it can look like all the cats are slow track and you can start to think that all the cats need extra time, but really, you don't want a mix much more than that with that many more slow-track cats than fast-track cats. Make sense?

Part of it is really just magic. You got to believe me. This works. I'm trying to explain why it works [*Laughs*]. And again, for those of you who are mathy, got the Excel spreadsheet, you can play all around with it, download it tonight, and send me harassing emails about things that don't work [*Laughs*]. I welcome it.

So let's say this coming month – here's a fairly small shelter, anticipate they're going to bring in 60 cats in June. What's the monthly daily average? Two. Yes. Good. So we want the pre-adoption length of stay to be somewhere between seven and ten. What's their pre-adoption capacity for care on the low end? Fourteen. Two times seven. On the high end? Twenty. We can do this.

So we need to plan in June. We want to have room for fourteen to twenty cats. If we look at hold and there's actually 40 cats there, we need to think about what's going on and maybe take some steps to drop that number.

Let's try it from the adoption side. We know 45 cats adopted on an average in June. Monthly daily average a little bit harder. It involves fractions [Laughs]. It's 1.5. So on average, 1.5 cats a day are going to get adopted. Three cats every two days.

We don't want the line to be more than seven to ten days long. So what are we going to do? One-point-five times seven is about eleven. One-point-five times ten. That's easier. Fifteen. So we can't have ten and a half cats, so our adoption capacity is eleven to fifteen. And if we look and we say, "Wow, we have 30 cats up for adoption", then what's the length of stay going to be? One-point-five adopted a day. Longer. Fifteen days. Twice as long as we want because we have twice as many cats.

Here it is in all its glory. You can just enter your data in here and it'll tell you what the recommendation is. And there's another little spot where you can put in your target length of stay and you can fool around with it. Say, "What if we did make our target length of stay seven days? How many cages would we need? Oh, if we do that, we could portal everything. If we don't do that, then oh, we could portal half of them and have good housing for our slow-track cats and try and keep our fast-track cats moving through quickly so they wouldn't need the portals as bad."

So this link is in the PowerPoint, but also if you go to sheltermedicine.com and type capacity into the search box, it'll bring up this Excel spreadsheet, which is constantly evolving as I get feedback from you all. And one of the things it calculates for you is the difference between how many cats are on site now, how much are you spending now versus how much is capacity for care? How much is your real income?

So it tells you what your gap is. So let's say, you know here's a shelter that's 54 cats over. What can you do? How many of you are capable of doing – of finding homes for 54 cats? Over a year? Pretty much any shelter can find homes for 54 cats over a year, right? They're going to find cats – find homes for 54 cats over a year's time, but you're going to have to find homes or another positive outcome for 54 more cats that come in over some period of time. You can do it one cat a week for 54 weeks. Just do one adoption promotion, one extra shelter, neuter, return to field.

Have one conversation with someone who's going to bring in a cat that they don't, but you got to bring your intake and outcome arrows – you know, you got to serve half the people in line before you get more in line. And then you go back to your steady state and serve more over time. Still open intake. Still same live release rate or higher. You bring it into balance once. So the first thing to do is define your goal. Fifty-four is a

lot easier than, I don't know, but a lot *[Laughs]*. Right? And especially when you're over capacity already and things are kind of frantic.

And track your progress, especially if you are going to do it over a long time. Track your triumph. "This week we got out one more cat than we admitted. Yeah." You can wait for the slow season and then make the changes to your housing during the slow season and it'll support your new capacity for caring, your new length of stay, and it'll just work when you get busy again.

And you can make doors so that if it doesn't work for one week, then you can close the doors and go back to the old way, but you won't want to because you will have lived in the new world. You can make one big push, you know, you can have a feline frenzy or a catapalooza or a cat extravaganza. They lend themselves to these kinds of names, right? Or a few smaller pushes over and above what you're already doing.

Or you can do fast track, an open selection. And I'm going to go over that because it's a little bit tricky. You can schedule intake or wait-list cats not forever. Remember, we just have to close the door to the Starbucks for ten minutes to serve ten extra people and then we can serve the same number or even more over time. Right? Whatever way you do it, reconfigure your housing. If you adopt out two cats and admit one, put in one portal. Open one door. Drop the number in a group room by one or make one huge push.

And I'll show you a shelter that did this in such a cute way. Again, explained to the community. So, "Reduces adoption fees to empty the shelter for construction." And this was so cute. I don't know if I actually have a slide, but you can click this link to actually read the news story. So they explain why they were doing it, and then they took pictures and Photoshopped little construction hats onto the cats and had a special price. And so they were able to really move a lot of cats out so that they could just do this once and then it supported their new flow.

So this is just more of why. "The portals will improve living conditions and reduce the amount of time between when cats enter the shelter and when they find new homes." They're just trying to explain succinctly what I just spent the last two and a half hours droning on about.

And then I'm going to go through this quickly because I know I'm getting a little short on time, but here is our line in Starbucks. And I made it two minutes so I could – I could fudge around with this. We have twenty customers in line. It takes two minutes to serve each one. It's going to take 40 minutes to get through the line until the end of time, right? As

long as people keep coming in every two minutes and you keep serving 'em every two minutes.

Well, what if actually about half the people they just want a muffin, they're like me, I don't drink coffee, and the other half they're paying, and they want a fancy mixed drink? So the muffin people it only takes one minute. The coffee people it takes three minutes. The sum total is still going to be 40 minutes, right? It's still going to take 40 minutes to get through this line. What if we decided to be really unfair, we rearrange the line, we send all the coffee people to the back, we're like, "You and your fancy coffees, you're going to wait, we're going to serve all the muffin people first"? How long is it going to take to get from the back to the front of the line now?

It's still 40 minutes. How long is it going to take the muffin people, though? The longest a muffin person will wait will be the minutes. Ten people, one minute per person. So the overall wait is the same. Some coffee people got the short end of that stick because they got sent to the back of the line when they were close to the front. But it benefits the muffin people. And what if we got all the muffin people out of the store in ten minutes and so for the other thirty minutes, everyone had a chair to sit on and they were less irritable when they got to the front, and so it took actually less time to fix their coffee because they didn't argue as much?

Or what if, you know, somebody actually started working on their coffee at the same time that they were handling the muffin transaction? Even if people still kept coming in every two minutes during that ten minutes, five more people would come in and there's still about 40 minutes worth of people in line, but you have fewer people in line. It doesn't matter that much at the Starbucks, but it matters hugely – if you could clear out 25 percent of your space and then know that for all the cats that are going to stay longer, they're adults, they're not super friendly, they don't have some groovy coat color, prioritize 25 percent of your space to be better housing and support the welfare of those cats. And then build it from there.

So no limiting intake, no special adoption push. All you do is look at the cats on intake and instead of making them all wait in line the same amount of time, if they're adoptable, they move to the front of the line. If you have room for one cat in spay/neuter and there's a kitten, you do the kitten. You have room for one and there's a friendly young adult, you do the friendly young adult. The less-adoptable cats are going to sit there anyway. They'll sit there unspayed for another day, but they were going to sit there after they were spayed for another day.

So here's a shelter that's all they did. Just bumped kittens and friendly young adults to the head of the line. By doing that, they dropped their total care days by over 10,000 days. Wow. They dropped the length of stay more for the slow-track cats than they did for the fast-track cats. Because they were able to portalize the cages in the back for the slow-track cats, the slow-track cats stayed healthier. With 10,000 fewer care days, the staff had more time to be more attentive to the needs of cats and adopters. And so they dropped length of stay for both groups. So the slow-track cats benefited as much as the fast-track cats.

And we also can – so we prioritized movement, we don't need as fancy of housing, we just want to get those highly-adoptable ones through the shelter and not sick. We don't have to enrich their little lives. Just get 'em out, get 'em out, get 'em out [*Laughs*]. And then for the slow-trackers, not only do we give them the best housing, but we also prioritize our promotion efforts. These kittens, they don't need help. They just need to be moved to the front. They get out.

Whereas the slow-trackers, they might need the price breaks, they might need the cute pictures with the hardhats on, they might need to get offsite or get some other promotion.

So here's just an example of a shelter that did this. Medium size, open intake. They had an animal control contract. And here's their adoption room. They had one cat per condo and forty-four condos. And an average length of stay of 25 days. So what did I immediately think when I saw those 44 condos that had portals that were closed between the two? Can they open those portals? Definitely because their length of stay is 25 days. So we could drop that to twelve and have the cats move through more quickly.

So if they have monthly, daily average adoptions of three a day, what's their ideal number? What's three times seven? Twenty-one. Three times ten? Thirty. That's pretty cool because we can have two kittens per condo, at least two kittens per condo. So if they opened all those portals, they could easily have 30 cats up for adoption when they've got some kittens in the mix or 22, and that's going to be their percent adoption-driven capacity. Sweet. They totally didn't believe us, initially.

But here's what they decided to do. They're like, "All right, we're going to try this. We're interested in this fast-track thing." So when two cats are adopted, any two are adopted – one cat's adopted, they leave the cage empty. Next cat is adopted, we open a portal and move a fast-track cat into that cage. We serve the muffin. It's not fair, but it works for everybody. Keep doing this until all the fast-track cats are moved up and all the portals are opened and then start moving up the slow-trackers.

Longest a slow-track cat had to wait was two weeks. They got to their capacity for care in a month after decades of being over capacity. And it wasn't awful. It just wasn't great. Their adoptions went up. Their length of stay dropped from – that was 25 days to adoption, 30 days overall to 23 days. Still not super short, but it dropped by 10,700 days, which equates to 29 fewer cats in the shelter every single day. And that's the difference between someone finishing at 3:00 in the afternoon or 11:00 in the morning and going over to help the dog team with enrichment. That's actually how it played out.

Cats on medication dropped dramatically. No change in policy whatsoever regarding intake or adoption. No special promotions, no waiting list, nothing. They got their completely by fast track. And this is their intake before and after. Adoptions before and after. Second cat room before and after for the slow-trackers. They're just getting more care. And I see the little sign. I have fifteen more minutes, right?

Okay, excellent. We're doing well, actually. And this is the kind of email I get that make me want to do these things because I don't want you guys to have to wait so long. "It's working so well. I'm completely blown away. The response from the public with regard to a lack of crowding has been very positive. And our volunteer retention for cat volunteers has improved with the improved housing conditions for the cats. It is a win-win-win program. I wish we would have started years ago." So don't be sending me that email four years from now. Send it to me four months from now.

And I got to just point this out. Do you want to see the full profile of that? Here's a link to a full-length webinar. One thing to keep in mind is that we have tended to wait for a negative thing. We tend to have reactive promotions a lot in shelters where we wait 'til we're crowded before we pull the trigger on free adoptions or catapalooza time. So the intake will still come, cats will still need homes. Plan your adoptions around every possible special occasion or just times when you know that intake tends to be higher.

And on an individual cat basis, instead of having adoption promotions for cats that have already been there for a month, use either your reasoning or a fast-track, slow-track scoring system to just know, "Hello, this cat is six years old and kind of just black and not outstanding. Let's put a head on it now, you know. Let's get it promoted now the instant it hits the adoption floor instead of waiting for it to become a long-stay cat."

So make a list for your calendar year of what your adoption promotions are going to be and just let that drive it instead of waiting for something bad to happen.

So this same shelter that did the fast-track, slow-track system, this is exactly what they did. Instead of having specials that were just sort of random or that affected all cats, as soon as a cat was identified as at risk for a long stay, it became an adoption special right away, and it was just random things. You know, here is a Photoshop, sunglasses on him. So hot cats, cool summer.

And if fast-track, slow-track, like, picking the kittens and moving them up to adoption, if that's too hard, if you're a huge shelter and you're moving 15,000 cats through, one – sort of the poor-man's fast-track, slow-track is just opening holding areas. So designate some holding area that's for dangerous cats or cats that are part of a custody case and just allow adopters – they don't see what they want up for adoption in the adoption area because maybe you have lots of cats up for adoption, but they're all sort of the adults and maybe one of the kittens are sitting in the back and getting sick before the room opens up in adoption.

Just let 'em come back, identify those cats that they want out of the ones that are waiting to be available for adoption and then you know. If you only have room for one in spay/neuter, you only have time to do an adoption – a physical exam on one, pick the one that already has an interested adopter.

[Laughs] Here's a long-term plan, is just – you know, it's not an option for every shelter, but a possibility is just don't admit more cats than you know you're going to be able to find live outcomes for. Let your live outcomes drive intake instead of having intake drive your hope for live outcomes. And I want to point out this does not mean limiting intake. This just means scheduling intake. So this may mean that you admit the same number. It may mean that you admit more over time because your system becomes more efficient. But it give you a chance to have more of a balancing act between the needs of the cats in the community and the needs of the cats in the shelter.

Just like with the question that was asked before the break about, like, “All these, you know, litters of kittens coming in and I've already got litters of kittens and I know we're full and I know we're going to have disease, we're going to have to euthanize some cats if we keep having them coming in.” Could think more about that and actually engage the community more in helping us with that decision. Explain the situation in the shelter and let them be part of the solution.

This is a write-up that was done about how to set up a waiting list, and it's not terribly complicated, and I'm going to show a picture. So this shelter did feline intake by appointment long before they did capacity for care. So they came at it from that direction and it was the intake by appointment that they made – they made that decision for another reason, and then that gave them the freedom, ultimately, to get to capacity for care. Whereas for some shelters, it works the other way around.

What this shelter found, I just got an email from them during the break, so in the first year that they did it, they found that 38 percent – they did this for stray cats as well. This is for owner-surrendered cats, healthy strays. About 30 percent found another solution. So because they weren't actually in the shelter when they were, you know, at that point, it's just the point of no return, then people aren't going to take the cat back.

But because they had to call, they had to make an appointment, they had to get on the waiting list, some of them found a new home for the cat. Some of them, whether it was their own cat or a cat that they found, decided to keep the cat. Some of them found another shelter or rescue that did have room. And about two percent of them found the owner of the cat, just about the same as the reclaim rate for most shelters. So they were equally able to reunite the cat with its owner and also more able, because they weren't overwhelmed, to actually rehome the cat responsibly themselves.

And then this shelter just recently – in 2013, they took it to another level and started providing spay/neuter for the cats on the waiting list. Partly that helped them. Then the cat was spayed/neutered and ready to go when it finally did come in. If something happened to the cat, it's a safety. It's not out there having babies anymore. And their percentage that were kept from the waiting list that didn't come in went from 30-something percent to 50-something percent. So it helped people to manage the situation themselves.

And if that cat had come in, the best-case scenario, they would have had the opportunity to spay/neuter it and put it in an adoptive home. So it was an expense they were going to incur anyway. And then I don't have the link here, I see, but that's available on the Maddie's Institute website. It's by Barbara Carr from the SPCA serving Erie County. So you can download that whole guidebook.

And remember, again, the BC SPCA is also an open-intake shelter system, but they did do some scheduling and some waiting lists to get things into balance. And one of their learnings – and you can go to this link and read the whole thing about their learnings, but retraining staff and volunteers to understand the difference between physical capacity and flow-through, overcome the misperception that the shelter was not being as helpful to

homeless cats when not every cage was occupied at all times, but when everyone sees the improvement in the health and welfare of the cats and they result in increase in adoptions, they felt more confident that the new model was helping more animals.

At first, it was hard to tell relinquishers that they were at capacity and some were upset, but once the shelter had implemented the program and was at its new capacity, it has never been a problem. And in fact, they're often looking for cats and kittens to transfer in or calling fosters to bring cats back due to greatly increased flow-through.

So wait for the right time. That can be helpful. So this is a shelter I only stopped intake for two days to make this happen. Twelve cats total was enough. And then what if, let's say – let's get right down to it – you calculate your perfect number and you have fine housing [*laughs*], but too many cats? Drop the number of cats in each room, open your portals just like that shelter I profiled in the fast-track example, and repurpose any extra room you have for special needs, special projects.

So if you look and you're like, "Wow, our perfect capacity to keep everyone moving through here quickly is 50 cats and our shelter was built for 100", well, think about what you could do with some rooms. Do you want to transfer in some more small dogs? Could you repurpose them for [*inaudible*] that? Do you want to have a ringworm program? Do you want to have an orphaned kitten program? What can you do that's not going to make your line too long to be productive? Hopefully that makes sense.

If your housing is too small, here's where I described to you, here's the link to the portal project. If you go to sheltermedicine.com and type the word portal into our search box, you'll come to that page with step-by-step guides. The portal project link also tells you about what we're trying to do with getting the molded plastic pre-manufactured, purpose-bred portal for you guys.

In holding areas, it's ideal to portalize side to side. It maximizes floor space for the cats and there's not as much business going on down here to stress the cats out that are on lower banks of cages. In adoption areas, because adopters tend to pay more attention to cats at eye level, it's more ideal to – if you have some cats that are stuck on the bottom, instead of having them always stuck on the bottom, portalize those cages up to down. Put the litterboxes all on the bottom so that those cats have more of an opportunity to be viewed by the public.

And so this is an email that I just got a couple weeks ago from The Erie SPCA. So, you know, they were already doing limited intake, they were

already finding homes for all healthy and treatable cats. So things were already great for several years now. And yet they weren't at capacity for care. They were still really anxious about taking this last step and putting the portals in. And so I just got this great email that I want to share with you.

“We've just completed our first month with our cat cages potholed. I have to tell you it was pretty scary to me to decrease our capacity, but so far, one month, these are the results. So URI is down 60 percent, cat intake, we just had to drop it by 15 cats, from 246 to [529], but already cat adoptions are up 15 percent from 226 to 260. So they already more than made up the difference.”

“Length of stay dropped from 21.3 to 17.3 days or 4 days per cat. Even without these great results, the first day I saw the cats in their new digs, seeing their completely different body language, relaxation, posture, et cetera. I was sorry, very sorry that I had put it off for so long. I am a believer, so don't you do that [Laughs].” And I'm really finishing this up now.

If you realize, like, we can't portalize – we – even with portals, we don't have enough. We really don't have enough to create the conditions that the cats need. Think about can you repurpose some other kinds of housing? Do you have some more flexibility in some dog areas where you could repurpose some dog runs for good cat housing? Think about matching the housing with the type of cats. So for instance, if you're doing shelter, neuter, return for ferals but you need to keep them for a few days, can you put up big chain link pens that they can just relax in instead of having to use some of your good cages for social cats that otherwise could be portaled and moved through more quickly?

So think about what are the options that are existing already in your shelter right now. Use some of your adoption housing if you're sort of under – you're right in your pre-adoption, so you're using lousy housing in pre-adoption, cats are getting sick, and then you're sort of overbuilt in adoption, which is fairly common in a lot of shelters. Then see if you can either repurpose some of your adoption housing for pre-adoption or just put your friendly animals straight into adoption to wait out their time for stray hold or time to be sterilized up there.

If you're going to go out and buy new housing, this is an example of some housing we really like. These are 30-inch compartments with portals side to side and up to down. So height of kitten season, you could have a litter of kittens in every single one of those. January when the volume is low and you really shouldn't have that many cats in the building and length of stay is going to tend to be longer, live one adult all four. So those are

really flexible in the way that they can be used. And there's no stainless steel version available, but now with better disinfectants, we can get away with using these types of materials for housing, even in pre-adoption.

For slow-track housing, think about breaking large group rooms into smaller groups just by putting in – and this is just coated wire barriers. So they don't have to be solid barriers. You don't want to build walls that impedes airflow anyway and makes it feel cramped. But this is a shelter that just pulled out cage banks and just put up that lightweight barrier with a little door in it. So really easy to do. Already talked about repurposing some dog runs if you are doing great on dogs and cats a little bit more of a challenge.

Then once you're at physical capacity for care, it's time to look at staff capacity for care. Not really going to get into this, except to say that it's important for each shelter to sit down and think about, like, how many minutes per cat per day. Don't worry about what the guidelines say. Just think about what you think is fair. Make a list of the things you want to do and how many minutes is that going to take? And multiply it by the number of cats. And just find out is your staff completely hosed *[laughs]* or do they actually have a fighting chance of doing that? And think about ways to bring that into balance if there is an imbalance there. Remember that capacity for care tends to increase capacity for care.

Dr. Kate Hurley: Just say you used to be a volunteer here.

Audience: I used to be a volunteer here *[inaudible]*.

Dr. Kate Hurley: What do you think of the new pattern?

Audience: I cried the first time I walked in here. Literally cheered.

Dr. Kate Hurley: It's really different than it was? *[Inaudible]* it's not fancy.

Audience: *[Laughs]* I used to walk in here and it'd be cage upon cage, cages down the middle, the cat litter smelled and dust from the cat litter was just – you'd be breathing it in and the cats were so stressed. And when I walked in here, the cats were just happy and they were relaxed; they were able to be cats.

Dr. Kate Hurley: Here's a volunteer we got back by capacity for care. And we underestimate how many people are driven off by being unable to emotionally manage the conditions for cats, both staff and volunteers. So wrapping it up, staying within capacity for care means less illness, more, quicker adoptions, shorter length of stay, means reduced cost. Reduced cost means more resources to build community capacity. Building

community capacity means fewer animals needing shelter in the first place. Just repeat as necessary. Call me in the morning.

And I'm just going to go through a few slides now. I forgot to actually get permission for this from Julie. Can I do it? Can I say it? All right. I'm going to tell you about a project. The 5 Million Lives Campaign was a campaign in the human healthcare world to reduce hospital-associated deaths as a result of mistakes. It was really hard for hospitals to acknowledge that they were making mistakes that were costing people's lives. Sound familiar?

And this group that was part of a group that was – their goal was to improve healthcare and reduce healthcare-associated mistakes issued a challenge at a national conference for hospital administrators. And they said in that challenge, "Many is not a number. Soon is not a time. Let's reduce healthcare mistake-associated death by 100,000 by this time next year." Hospitals signed up to participate. They identified six key initiatives to do it.

The hospitals could do it because they supported each other. They didn't have to be alone in admitting that they had these errors occurring. And they reduced their deaths by over 130,000. So I issued that challenge at expo last year, just a year ago, and we had people sign up to reduce death of cats in shelters by over 130,000. I don't have any way of following up, but out of that experience, Julie let me know I conceived the Million Cat Challenge, and can I say this, Laurie [*Laughs*]? Maddie's Fund is supporting it. We just completed the wire transfer of the funds today. So today is a great day.

And when we conceived the Million Cat Challenge, we didn't realize that the 100,000 Lives Challenge had also gone to the 5 Million Lives Campaign, but it did. Over 4,000 hospitals participated. They identified six more key initiatives, and they saved over 5,000,000 lives over baseline. So that's what the Million Cat Challenge is going to be. Prepare to see the new logo. Oops [*Laughs*]. There it is. Isn't it cute?

And I just want you to notice this orange cat does have a tipped ear. It's going to be a shelter-based initiative. This is about not what we tell you to do, but what you do, how you overcome the challenges that you face, whether it's a giant shelter where kittens are coming in by the hundreds every single day or whether it's a poor shelter in an isolated community where you only have one veterinarian that will do spay and neuter for you on pediatric kittens, but it's about each shelter figuring out how to solve their challenges and then sharing those solutions with each other. And also identifying how we succeed, how we bring those numbers into balance.

Goal is five-year reduction in euthanasia compared to baseline, whether that's by S&R, whether that's by capacity for care, whether that's by scheduled intake or other key initiatives. If you want to get on the bus with us, right now these are the links. Soon millioncatchallenge.com is going to be live. You can also email sheltermedicine@ucdavis.edu to participate in the Million Cat Challenge, to let me know how it's going as you work through these capacity for care guidelines.

If you're fooling around with this spreadsheet and it's not working for you, we really want this to work, so please I'm going to invite my email to be full, but I want to know. So please get in touch. Thank you. And I now have ten minutes for questions. I will stay until midnight, though. Thank you *[Applause]*. Yes. Come on up, I guess. Are we still live?

Audience: Okay, I don't have a question, but I have a comment. In 2011, we initiated almost all of the things you talked about today in our shelter. We, over that period of time, have reduced our length of stay from 28 days to 9.

Dr. Kate Hurley: Whew-hoo.

Audience: Our shortest length of stay is two hours *[laughs]*, and that was a cat that came in as an owner surrender, we did the medical, physical, put him in a window, and two hours later he's adopted and gone.

Dr. Kate Hurley: Awesome.

Audience: So it does work.

Dr. Kate Hurley: Awesome. Thank you *[Applause]*. Email her *[Laughs]*. Hope you'll be in the Million Cat Challenge and share some of the successes that you've already had. And even if you think it'll only be one cat *[inaudible]* for you this year, I still hope you'll join because that's how we get there is just one by one. Well, feel free to swarm the front *[laughs]* at the end with all the questions that you're too shy to shout out there. I know there's probably still a few out there, and please stay in touch. And thank you so much for your time and attention today and all that you do *[Applause]*.

[End of audio]