



Back Where They Belong

Focusing on Return to Home in the Field

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Maddie's® Million Pet Challenge
UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program



The Public's Perspective

- Field services' role in the public's eye
- May be their primary contact with your shelter and services
- Vital to unify sheltering and field services



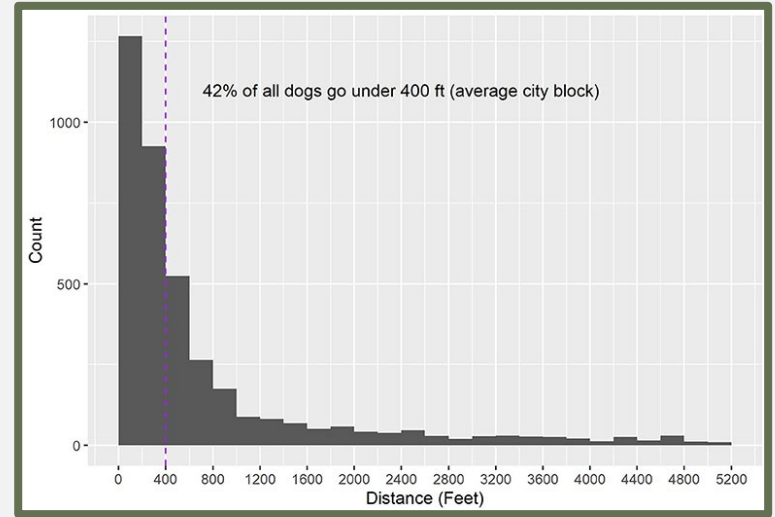
RTH Culture in the Field

- What happens in the field impacts everybody
- The value of RTH Culture in the Field
- Remember, in most cases RTH is a best option – especially in the field
- How can we increase RTH in the field



Return to Home Goals

- Generally the preferred solution for lost pets
- Most are found very close to home
- 70% found within 1 mile of home



<http://tinyurl.com/D1B2Resources>

Trip to Shelter

- Should be last resort
- Crowding – mental, emotional and physical impacts
- Other options often better for everyone
- Less likely to be returned to owner just due to trip to shelter
- Many don't understand the shelter system



Field RTH

- Better for pet
- Better for owner
- Better for shelter
- Better for the community
- Time and cost savings



Policies and Practices

- Clear protocols/policies that prioritize RTH
- Expectations to follow steps
- Starts with assessing animal
- Prioritize RTH if no other concerns




ID Check and Follow-up

- Check for collar/ID
- Scan for chip
- Use chip lookup/shelter databases
- Trucks must have scanners
- Follow-up on info found ASAP (in the field)



Follow Found Protocols

- Good picture and description
- Upload to platforms
- Upload to shelter
- Do this ASAP
- Let folks know you have the pet even while you're still in the field.
- Have protocols for who posts which animals and where
- Have a sense of urgency



Check out the
**“Leverage Social Media, Other
Internet Resources and
Volunteers to Supercharge
RTH”** session
on Day 2 of this event.

The graphic features several social media icons: a purple Instagram icon at the top, a green Nextdoor icon on the left, a blue Facebook icon in the center, a purple magnifying glass with a paw print at the bottom left, a green WhatsApp icon at the bottom right, and a green square with a white dog face on the right side. A faint 'ring' watermark is also visible in the background.

Work the Neighborhood

- Once listed/posted – work the neighborhood
- Walk around neighborhood
- Walk pet around if behaviorally okay
- Have business cards
- Perform door-to-door check ins
- Door hangers/flyers – with info on how to reclaim the found pet
- Success may depend on community relations
- Build those relationships to improve RTH in the Field success



Animal Services Role

- Build trust and relationships
- Move from punitive “dog catcher” image to community partner
- Field services – public face of your agency
- Build relationships – stop and talk
- Engage the community – carry resources, fun items for kids/people
- Move away from punitive role to trust and providing services/solutions
- Partner with the community



From Punishment to Support

- Citations DO NOT:
 - Mend fences (literally or figuratively)
 - Spay/neuter animals
 - Help owners with their pets
- Citations DO:
 - Create roadblocks to RTO
- Citations don't prevent people from having pets (they'll just get another pet)
- Most people want to do the right thing for their pet
- They may just need resources or information
- Help animal owners instead of focusing on punishing them



Complicated Relationships

- Some community members (especially of unhouse, marginalized, undocumented communities) have complicated relationships with authority figures.
- Paramilitary appearance and attitude – often hurts relations with community
- May also inadvertently encourage a punitive mindset
- “Police-like” uniforms can do more harm than good in animal services
- Work to create a community-centric animal services



Ice Cream Truck Aspirations

- One easy change – our vehicles.
- Historically looked like law enforcement
- Can improve community relations
- Portray agency as support, resources to help pet owners.
- Ice cream truck thoughts



Community Focus

- Community focused animal services is an opportunity
- Increase your engagement with the community
- Goal – authentic and lasting relationships
- Increase how many animals can go home and stay there



How are you doing?

- Track and analyze data
- Justify resources and policy changes
- PetCo Love Lost Workbok

"Petco Love Lost is so important to the work shelters do and to the community. It allows community members to be part of the solution in reuniting pets without using valuable shelter resources, which in turn frees up those resources for shelters to use for the most vulnerable pets!"
— Monica Dangler, Director of Pima Animal Care Center



FROM INTAKE TO ENGAGEMENT: Keeping and Getting More Lost Pets Home

This workbook was created in collaboration with **Kristen Hassen** of **Outcomes for Pets Consulting**.



<http://tinyurl.com/D1B2Resources>

How are you doing?

- HASS RTH Benchmarking Tool is a great resource.



<http://tinyurl.com/D1B2Resources>

HASS RTH Benchmarking Tool

This tool estimates an appropriate goal or benchmark for the dog-only return to home (RTH) rate for individual organizations. Rather than producing a single expected rate for all organizations, the calculator accounts for differences in circumstances that can influence an organization's capacity for returning lost pets to their homes. In creating this tool, we assessed the RTH rates of 1,000+ organizations and found that certain key factors have a meaningful relationship with RTH rates. Users will input details on these factors, which include the organization's type and region, its total and stray intake size, and a multidimensional indicator of its local area's socioeconomic status.

Inputs	Derived Values
Organization Type Government Animal Services	Percent Stray Intake The percent of all intakes which were stray
State Select State	Region Region
County Select County	Social Vulnerability Index Value (2020) SVI Value
Annual Dog Intake Annual dog intake	
Annual Stray Dog Intake Annual stray dog intake	

Calculate Your RTH Rate Benchmark

Results

How it all works

- ▶ What is your definition of RTH Rate?
- ▶ How did you arrive at the factors in your calculator?
- ▶ What are the features actually used in the calculation and how do they affect the result?
- ▶ What data was used and which organizations are included in it?
- ▶ What about cats and cat RTH?
- ▶ Does HASS have resources to begin or enhance RTH programs?
- ▶ I have a question or comment, can I contact someone about this tool?

Help is Available

- HASS Playbook



<http://tinyurl.com/D1B2Resources>

How to Use the HASS Playbook

Utilize the HASS Playbook and self-assessments in one of three ways:

1. Complete a self-assessment for each of our five main Playbook sections: Foundations, Pet Support Services, Lost Pet Reunification, Supported Self-Rehoming, and Intake-to-Placement. The self-assessment results will provide a **customized outline with guides to help create new or improve existing programs based on your responses.**
2. Complete a self-assessment for our five main Playbook categories and receive a complete PDF for each Playbook section, in addition to customized results.
3. Want to download all of our guides? Access the complete HASS Playbook below.

[DOWNLOAD THE PLAYBOOK](#)

Foundations

Create a foundation for sustainable programming within your organization.

[TAKE THE ASSESSMENT →](#)



Pet Support Services

Community services identified or developed by a shelter to assist pets and people in need.

[TAKE THE ASSESSMENT →](#)



Lost Pet Reunification

Shelter services that prioritize reuniting pets with their families.

[TAKE THE ASSESSMENT →](#)



Supported Self-Rehoming

Programs that enable the community to participate in the process of finding new homes for their pets without having to enter a shelter.

[TAKE THE ASSESSMENT →](#)



Intake-to-Placement

Process of taking in animals in need and identifying or placing them in the best environment available.

[TAKE THE ASSESSMENT →](#)

Thank You!

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Resources & References

1. HASS Playbook
2. HASS Benchmarking Tool
3. PetCo Love Lost
4. “More Than a Furry Companion: The Ripple Effect of Companion Animals on Neighborhood Interactions and Sense of Community”
5. “Punishment to Support: The Need to Align Animal Control Enforcement with the Human Social Justice Movement”



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