



# ***Back Where They Belong***

***The Crucial Role of Return to Home  
in Reducing Shelter Crowding and  
Euthanasia Today***

**Kate Hurley, DVM - Director  
Koret Shelter Medicine Program  
At the University of California, Davis**

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



# Our Event Agreements

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We are committed to hosting diverse and inclusive spaces for people of all backgrounds, experiences, and points of view. We center the University of California, Davis, Principles of Community and affirm the dignity inherent in all of us. We strive to maintain a climate of equity and justice demonstrated by respect for one another. We acknowledge that our society, including our field, carries within it historical and deep-rooted injustices and biases. Therefore, we endeavor to foster mutual understanding and respect among the many parts of our whole:

- We seek to create a space for healthy dialogue where participants are mindful of impact, respectful, compassionate, and open to growth.
- We strive to host a space free of microaggressions, harmful speech, and hurtful generalizations.
- We will work to call in participants who fall outside of these boundaries. Comments that use ethnic or racial slurs, hateful speech, personal attacks, and abusive language will be deleted.
- We welcome participants to message the Webinar Moderators directly during this event if you would like to speak on the inclusivity of this event or have any questions or concerns.



<http://tinyurl.com/UCDPrinciples>

# WHY are we here?





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'Not enough adoptions' | West Michigan animal shelter

**SPCA of Texas: Too many dogs and cats need adoption** 'crisis' ahead

The economic climate has affected shelter adoptions



Kalie Guerrero, 3, looked at a dog to potentially adopt at Dallas Area Shelter. There are more animals coming in to shelters and not enough adoptions. (Lands / Staff Photographer)

**'Heartbreaking': Shelters across Western New York dealing with too many animals, not enough adoptions**

Debadrita Sur Oct 16, 2023



**Animal Shelters Under Pressure: Euthanasia Up 25% as Chicago's City Shelter Experiences Surge in Strays, Difficulty Finding Enough Adopters**

December 5, 2023 5:00 am





# What do the numbers say?

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## 2023 Data from Shelter Animals Count (SAC)

(For shelters with stray intake contracts only.)

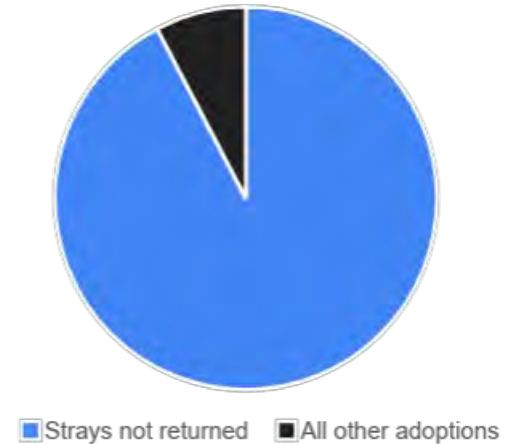
- Overall dog intake = 723,281
- Stray dog intake = 543,265
- Stray dogs returned = 192,000
- Strays NOT returned:  
 $543,265 - 192,000 = 351,015$

What is YOUR  
number of strays  
not returned?

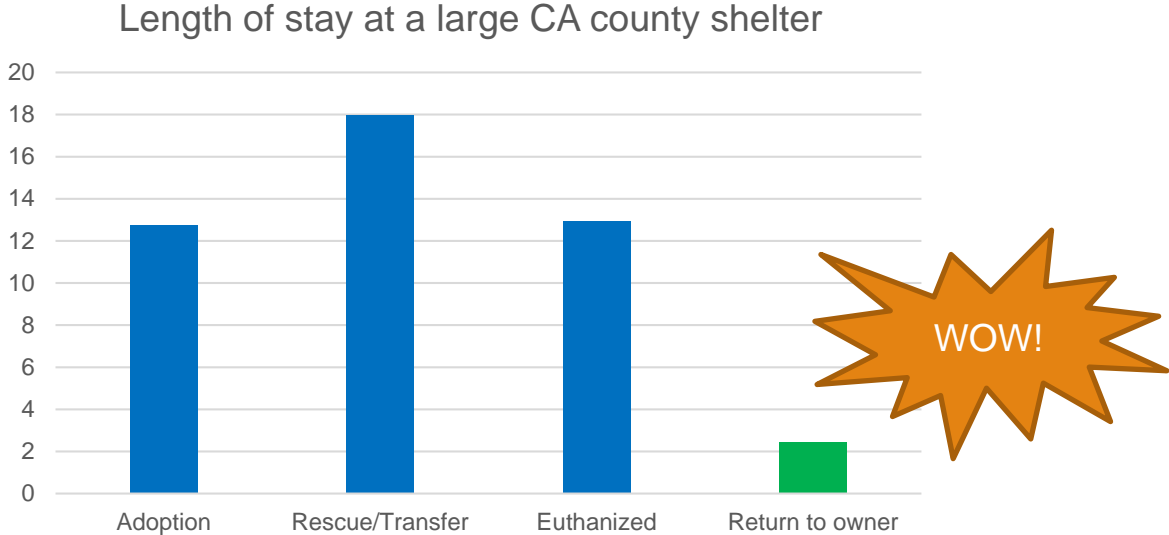
# Good news???!!!

- **351,015 strays that were not returned home** will need a different live outcome if they are not to be euthanized
- 391,909 total adoptions performed by this same group of shelters
- Unreturned strays used up about 90% of ALL adoptions :-0

~ Percent of unreturned stray dogs out of total adoptions



# More good news





# What if.....

- More dogs left the shelter in less than half the length of stay (or no length of stay at all)?
- Half as many dogs needed to find adoptive homes?
- What would you do with all that glorious time and space?



# What barriers have to come down?

**Knowing the animal might be at a shelter**

**Accessing the internet to find out more**

**Speaking the language(s) describing the details of how to navigate the reclaim process**

**Finding the time to get to the shelter during open hours**

**Finding transportation to the shelter (and back home with the pet)**

**Overcoming reluctance/fear of going to a place where people wear uniforms and badges**

**Overcoming reluctance to come get an unruly teenage pet that has gotten on their last nerve lately**

**Affording fees**

# Who is most impacted?

## Percentage of Americans Unable To Cover a \$400 Emergency Expense Shoots Back Up to Pre-Pandemic Levels

David Nadelle

Thu, Jun 1, 2023 · 4 min read



CNBC MARKETS BUSINESS INVESTING TECH POLITICS CNBC TV INVESTING CLUB PRO

PERSONAL FINANCE

## 62% of Americans are still living paycheck to paycheck, making it 'the main financial lifestyle,' report finds

PUBLISHED TUE, OCT 31 2023-8:30 AM EDT | UPDATED TUE, OCT 31 2023-9:09 AM EDT

Jessica Dickler @JDICKLER

SHARE f t in e

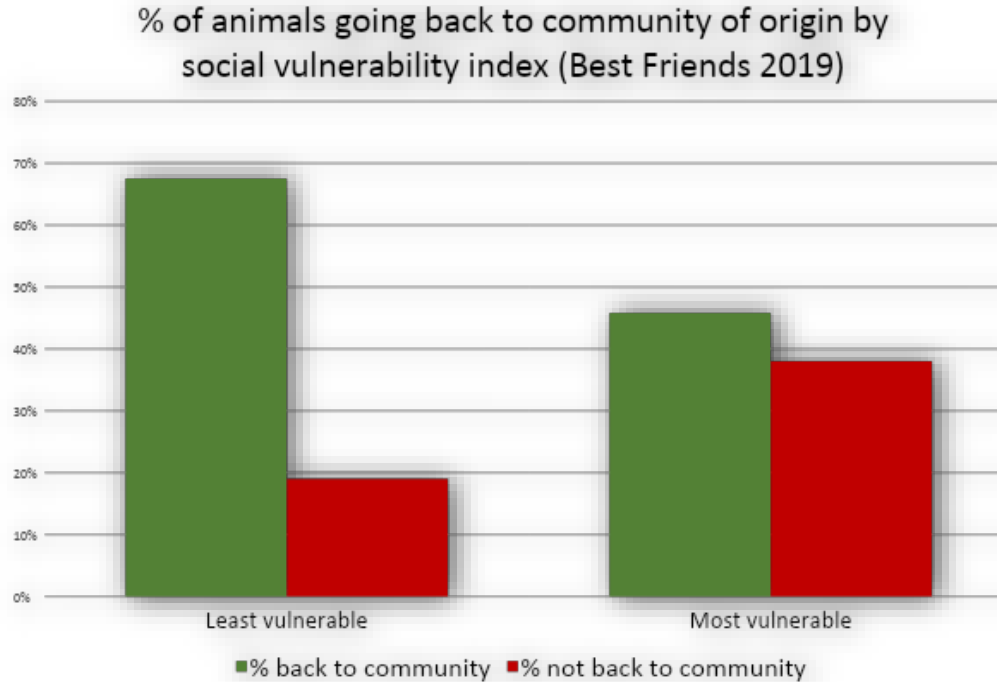
**KEY POINTS**

- The number of Americans who say they are stretched too thin has shown no signs of improvement amid high prices and higher interest rates.

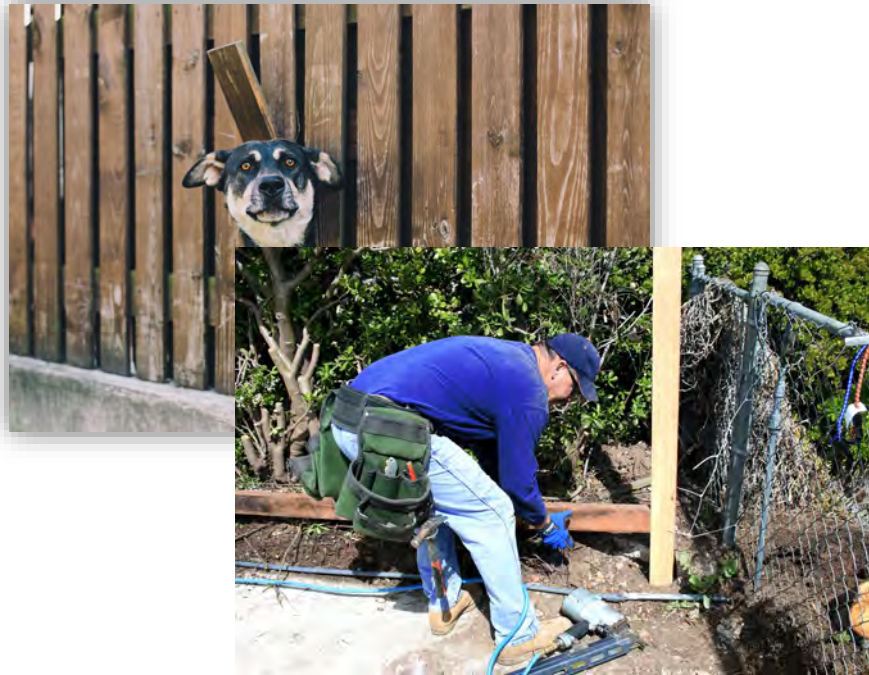
UP NEXT Power Lunch 02



# Remember the vacuum effect



# Opposite of the vacuum effect



# What about the “non-stray strays”?

## Surge in Unwanted Dogs Fuels ‘Crisis’ Across U.S. Animal Shelters



Dogs that are up for adoption gather together at the Humane Society of Greater Miami on Dec. 13, 2023. Joe Raedle—Getty Images

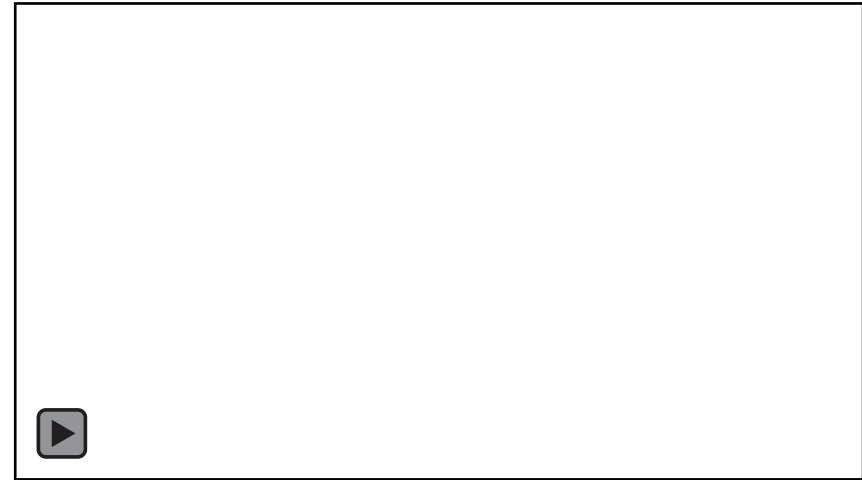
<https://time.com/6552905/stray-dogs-animal-shelters-overcrowding/>



# How can we calculate what we don't know?

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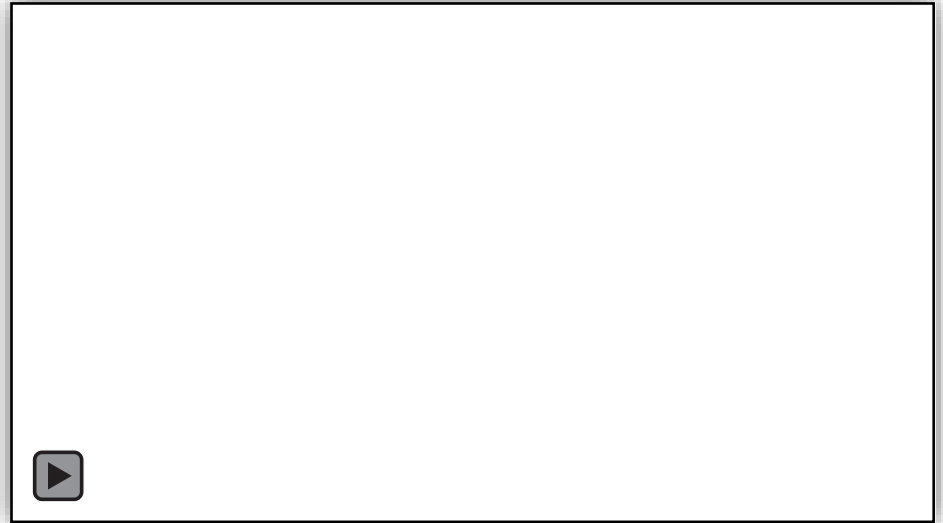
- What is our RTO rate?
- **Returns divided by WHAT?**
- What's our denominator in this equation?
- All intakes? (probably not)
- Stray intakes? (maybe)
- "True Strays" – yes, but...
- How do we even know the number of "True Strays?"



# What is the path that we've shaped?

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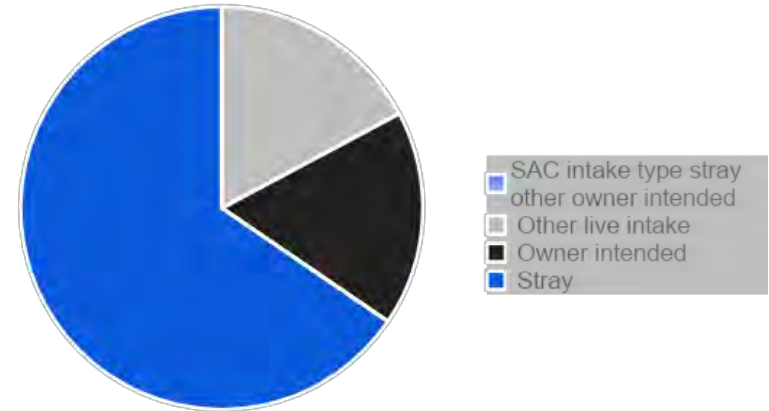
- Policy
- Cost
- Waiting time/appointment required
- Transportation
- Emotional experience
- What else?



# Shaping the path for success...

- 1 in 6 dogs admitted are relinquished by their owners
- 1 in 6 come in by some other means (transfer or custody)
- 4 in 6 come in as stray
- The vast majority of dogs admitted to shelters are not there either by the intention OR the acknowledgement of their owners
- Supporting owners to keep pets only work for owner-intended and acknowledged intake

**Owner intended versus stray intake**



# What are the benefits of owner surrenders coming in as known owner surrenders instead of “strays”

- Able to get information on animal
  - Medical info
  - Behavioral info
  - Previous environment info
- Builds an open and honest relationship with members of your community.
- Honors the difficult decision the owner has had to make.
- Allows you to be better able to figure out your true “Stray RTO” rate over time.



# Enjoy the Event!

## **Wednesday, February 28: At the Shelter**

### **Day Two Schedule**

*Note: times listed are Pacific (PT).*

- **9 a.m.** – Event kickoff
- **9:10 a.m.** – **Keynote** – Dr. Kate Hurley, UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program

#### **Block 1 9:35 a.m.–11:45 a.m.**

- **9:40 a.m.** – **Focusing on Return to Home at the Shelter to Get More Animals Back Where They Belong** – Shyanne Schull, Washoe County Animal Services
- **10:10 a.m.** – **Easy Shelter Website Changes to Increase Return to Home** – Tori Fugate, KC Pet Project
- **10:40 a.m.** – **Making It Easy for Owners to Find and Redeem Lost Pets: Tech Tips and Communication Strategies** – Bobby Mann and Mia Navedo-Williams, Humane Rescue Alliance
- **11:10 a.m.** – **Panel discussion and Q&A with speakers and guests**

#### **Block 2 11:45 a.m.–2:00 p.m.**

- **11:45 a.m.** – **Getting Pets Home with Better Approaches to On-Pet IDs and ID/Microchip Tracing** – Nina Stively, Loudoun County Animal Services
- **12:15 p.m.** – **Leveraging Social Media, Other Internet Resources and Volunteers to Supercharge Return to Home** – Jordan Frey and Caroline Malcolm, San Diego Humane Society
- **12:30 p.m.** – **Removing Barriers to Get More Animals Back Where They Belong** – Akisha Townsend Eaton, Companions and Animals for Reform and Equity (CARE)
- **1:15 p.m.** – **Panel discussion and Q&A with speakers and guests**
- **1:50 p.m.** – **Event closing and What Found Feels Like contest winners announced**

For more info visit: [www.sheltersummit.com](http://www.sheltersummit.com)

# Thank You!

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## ***Resources for This Keynote***

<http://tinyurl.com/D2B1Resources>

