National Canine Advocacy Group



STATEMENT FROM TABTO AND NATIONAL CANINE ADVOCACY GROUP REGARDING NO-KILL COLORADO'S PROPOSED COLORADO RESCUE ACT (SUMMARIZED ON NO-KILL COLORADO'S WEBSITE)

About Us

TABTO and National Canine Advocacy Group have worked closely with shelters, rescues, legislators, and regulators for eight years to improve the quality of life and standards of care for Colorado dogs. We've been stakeholders in past Pet Animal Care Facilities Act (PACFA) Sunset Reviews, and we've provided factual information to legislators to use in their consideration of proposed legislation. We've testified for some of the most important animal welfare laws in the State, and we have rescued dogs from rural Colorado. Our singular goal is that every dog has a good life.

We are opposed to the proposed "Colorado Rescue Act" for the following reasons:

1. Coordination between shelters and rescues does not need to be codified. Collaboration can be accomplished within the animal welfare community. In fact, in 2022, more dogs and cats were transferred between Colorado organizations than were euthanized.
2. A "mechanism" for shelters and rescues to collaborate should not be limited to animals already identified to be euthanized. Long-term stay animals are at increasing risk of euthanization the longer they are in the shelter and should be networked also.
3. This legislation is based on the belief that thousands of healthy and treatable animals are being euthanized when Colorado's overall dog and cat save rate is 94.2%. [(1)] The shelter save rate for dogs and cats combined is 93.0%. [(2)]
4. There are not as many PACFA-licensed shelters and rescues as No-Kill Colorado claims that can reasonably be expected to pull animals from shelter euthanasia lists even if they were published. This results in fewer opportunities than No-Kill Colorado asserts.
5. No-Kill Colorado's claim the legislation will improve transparency is nothing more than a cover for shaming shelters.

Where We Agree:

1. Coordination between shelters and rescues can save lives.

In February 2024, Colorado legislators expressed similar concerns when hearing the proposed legislation and voted against it.

Question: What evidence is there that healthy and treatable homeless pets are being euthanized by shelters?

No-Kill Colorado (NKC) asserts that at least 4,500 healthy and treatable homeless pets were euthanized in 2022. This assertion is based on a belief that 50% of the approximately 9,000 animals euthanized in Colorado in 2022 were healthy and treatable but were euthanized by shelters anyway. No evidence has been presented to stakeholders or ultimately to legislators to support NKC's assertion.

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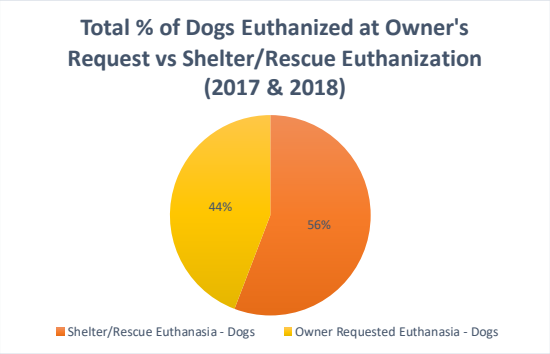
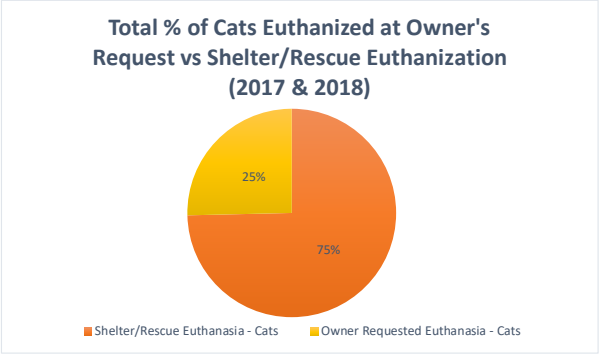
Also, NKC has failed to consider the extent of shelters' control over euthanasia decisions.

For example, owner-requested euthanasia is not a small part of total shelter euthanization. To illustrate this, we can look at PACFA data. Prior to 2019, PACFA required shelters and rescues to report shelter euthanasia separately from owner-requested euthanasia. Because this is no longer required, to evaluate the control over euthanasia decisions that shelters have, we must make some assumptions based on 2017 and 2018 data. [3] This data supports an assumption that 44% of dogs and 25% of cats are euthanized by shelters *at the owners' request*.





Using the percentages above, owner-requested euthanasia totaled 3,350 animals in 2022. If in fact NKC's assertion is true that 4,500 healthy and treatable animals were euthanized by shelters in 2022, that would mean of the 5,956 animals euthanized at the shelter's discretion, only 1,456 or 24% were *unhealthy* and *untreatable* animals and were thus appropriately euthanized. This defies logic and completely invalidates NKC's assertions.

Question: Assuming there is a widespread problem of shelters euthanizing healthy and treatable pets, which we believe there isn't, do we really have "over 300 PACFA licensees that can save lives"?

We estimate there are 212 shelters and rescues that ***are not likely*** to pull animals but are still subject to additional regulation and daily communication about animals that they cannot help. This leaves just 40% of NKC's stated 300+ licensees that can save lives.

Shelter & rescue analysis:[2]

	Shelters	Rescues	Total
PACFA-Licensed Shelters & Rescues	167	188	355
Adjustments:			
Organizations Double-Counted	-14	-2	-16
Don't Take Dogs and/or Cats	-21	-2	-23
TNR, S/N, Other	-2	-3	-5
Breed-Specific Rescues	0	-63	-63
Age-Specific Rescues	0	-3	-3
Service Dogs	0	-3	-3
Micro Shelter/Rescue (< 48 Dogs ***and*** Cats Adopted Out in 2022)	-23	-40	-63
City/County Shelters	-36	0	-36
Possible Candidates to Take Transfers	71	72	143

In addition, there are 42 Colorado rescues whose intake is at least 80% puppies and/or kittens[2], making them less likely to transfer in adult animals on a euthanasia list. With all this, there are only around 100 shelters and rescues that *might* be willing and able to take in adult animals on a euthanasia list.

As a service to stakeholders in this proposed legislation, National Canine Advocacy Group and TABTO are willing to contact these 100 shelters and rescues and gauge their ability to transfer animals in from Colorado shelters. This will

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allow stakeholders to truly evaluate the viability of the program NKC is advocating. No-Kill Colorado did not accept our offer.

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Question: Does this legislation improve transparency?

Per NKC website, the "Colorado Rescue Act" will:

"Improve Transparency

Additionally, some shelters may argue that posting pending euthanasia would make them look bad. However, taxpayers have a right to know how their local shelters operate. More importantly, shelters would kill fewer animals, reducing staff workload, stress, and mental suffering and increasing volunteerism. Finally, the increasing placement of animals due to the notice would improve their community standing."

TABTO and National Canine Advocacy Group find it incredibly insulting to the staff of Colorado's shelters to say, "some shelters may argue posting pending euthanasia would make them look bad…[and] More importantly, shelters would kill fewer animals…". This is essentially saying there are some shelters who are willfully euthanizing animals that could be saved and that the leadership at these shelters do not care about "…staff workload, stress, and mental suffering…". Public shaming of shelters does not save animals' lives and the fact that NKC seeks to do just that is illustrative of their motivations for this bill.

What should we do instead?

Collect data from shelters and rescues to better understand the reasons for euthanasia (i.e., modify PACFA reporting to 2017 and 2018 standards to show clearly animals euthanized at an owner's request).

Work with shelters and rescues to develop productive partnerships to transfer healthy, safe animals. By helping just ***two*** Colorado shelters with a combined save rate of 76.1% in 2022[(2)] achieve a 90% save rate, more than 200 animals could be saved.

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(1) Calculated based on the PACFA-reported 2022 Shelter/Rescue Statistics Form.
(2) Calculated based on PACFA-reported 2022 Animal Shelter and Rescue Individual Statistics.
(3) Calculated based on PACFA-reported 2017 and 2018 Animal Shelter and Rescue Individual Statistics.

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