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THE FOUNDATION FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND EDUCATION PROMOTING  
ANIMAL WELFARE

**ANALYSIS OF RESULTS FOR TUSCALOOSA COUNTY  
MADDIE'S FUND COMMUNITY PROGRAM**

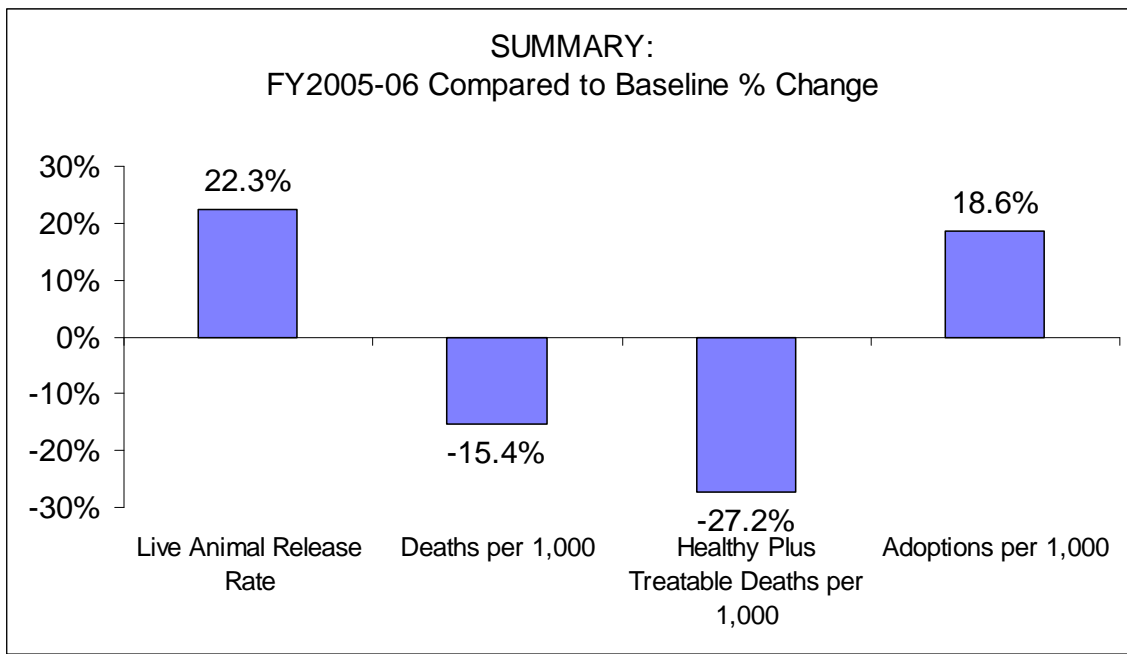
**FY2005-06  
Summary Report**

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## ANALYSIS OF RESULTS FOR TUSCALOOSA COUNTY COMMUNITY PROGRAM

### Introduction

In its first program year (FY2005-06) Tuscaloosa County made substantial progress in all of its key program areas (Figure 1). The overall animal death rate per 1,000 people in the community dropped 15%. The death rate of animals that are either healthy or with treatable conditions per 1,000 people dropped 27%. Animal adoptions per 1,000 people increased 19%. The live animal release rate, a measure of the portion of shelter animals that are adopted or redeemed, was up 22%. In the baseline period the live animal release rate was 23%. In the first program year the live animal release rate was 28%.



**Figure 1**

## Total Death Rate

The first program year for Tuscaloosa ran from the second quarter of 2005 to the first quarter of 2006. The baseline period was the calendar year of 2004. In the first program year, total deaths of animals in Tuscaloosa dropped 14.6% compared to the baseline period (see Figure 2). When the size of the human population is taken into account, animal deaths dropped 15.4% to 29.1 deaths per 1,000 people. The level of deaths in Tuscaloosa is high relative to the country at large, with Tuscaloosa's baseline death rate of 34.4 animals per thousand people being more than double the average for the country. However, this death rate is not necessarily high relative to many other regions in the southeastern United States. More importantly, Tuscaloosa made significant progress in the first program year towards reducing the death rate.

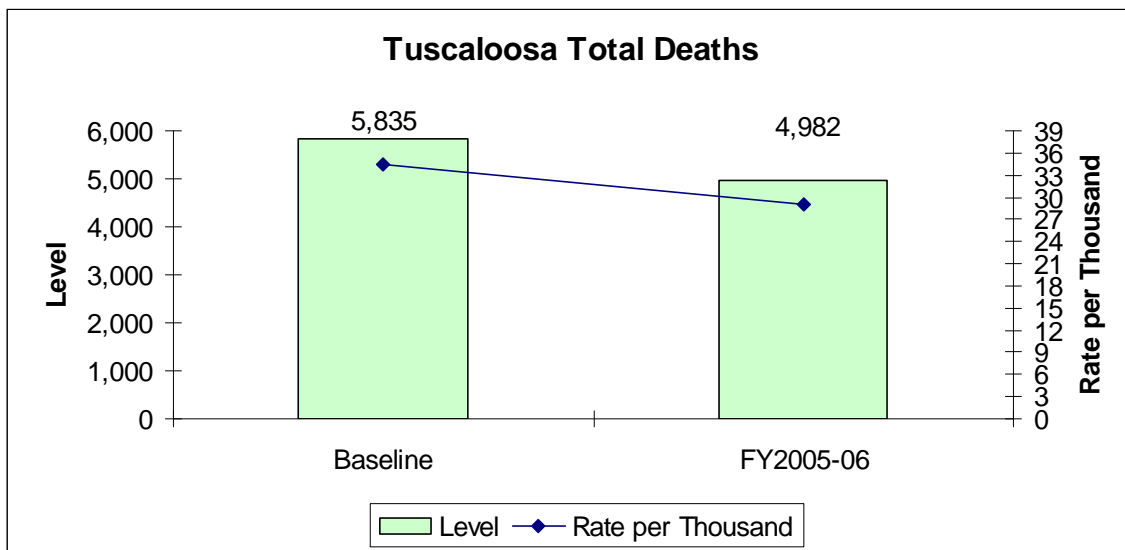
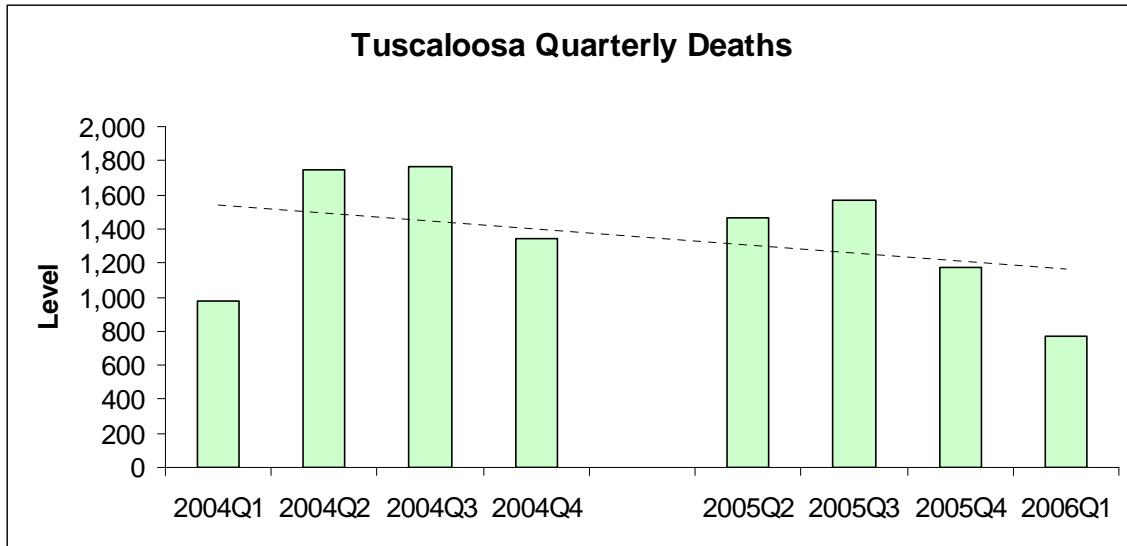


Figure 2

The quarterly death rate is shown in Figure 3. There is a clear seasonal pattern with a peak in the third quarter and a trough in the first quarter. All four quarters of the first program year had death rates below the baseline period. The first quarter of 2006, which is also the latest quarter for which data is available, had the lowest death rate of any quarter in the program so far. It also had the greatest percentage decline of any quarter compared to the same quarter in the baseline period. However, deaths are normally lowest in the first quarter, therefore not too much should be made of the unusually low death rate in the first quarter of 2006 in particular.



**Figure 3**

The decline in the death rate in the first program year was more than double the program's goal (see Figure 4). Even if Tuscaloosa's death rate does not decline any further in the second program year, the second year's total death goal would be met as long as the death rate did not increase.

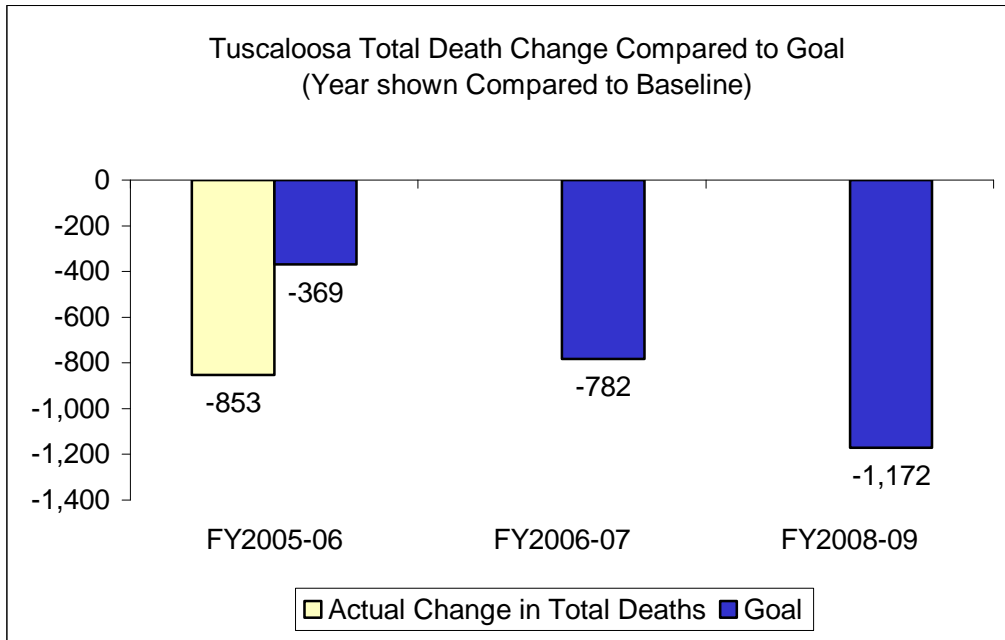


Figure 4

### Healthy Animal Deaths

Healthy animal deaths declined 51.5% in the first program year, changing from 1,952 deaths to 946 deaths (see Figure 5). When population size is taken into consideration, healthy animal deaths declined 52.0% to 5.5 deaths per thousand people in FY2005-06.

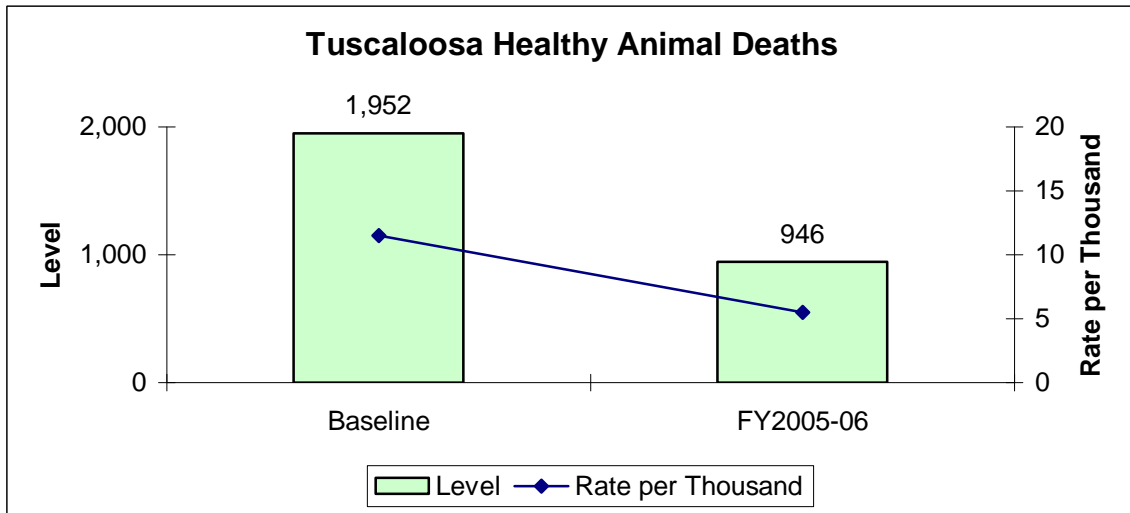


Figure 5

On a quarterly basis, the decline in healthy animal deaths is equally impressive (see Figure 6). Once again, deaths are highest in the third quarter and lowest on average in the first quarter. Every quarter showed a decline from the same quarter in the baseline period. The strongest percentage decline was in the fourth quarter of 2005, when healthy animal deaths declined 61.2%. In the first quarter of 2006, the latest quarter for which data is available, healthy animal deaths declined 38.2%

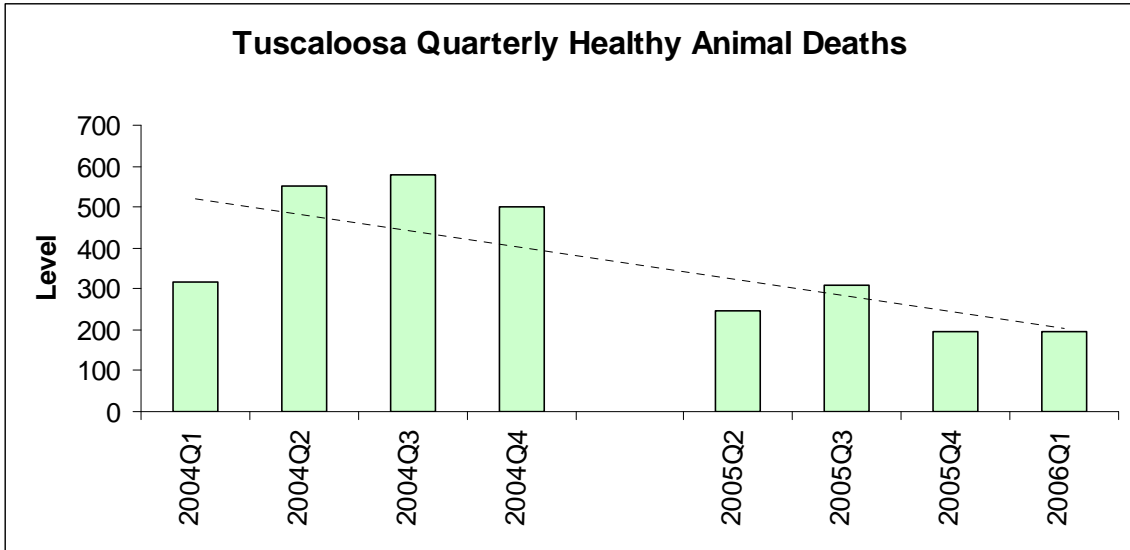


Figure 6

The reduction of healthy animal deaths was more than double the Maddie’s Fund program goal for the first program year (see Figure 7). The FY2005-06 the healthy animal death change exceeded the next year’s (i.e. FY2006-07) goal, and it was reasonably close to the third year’s (FY2007-08) goal.

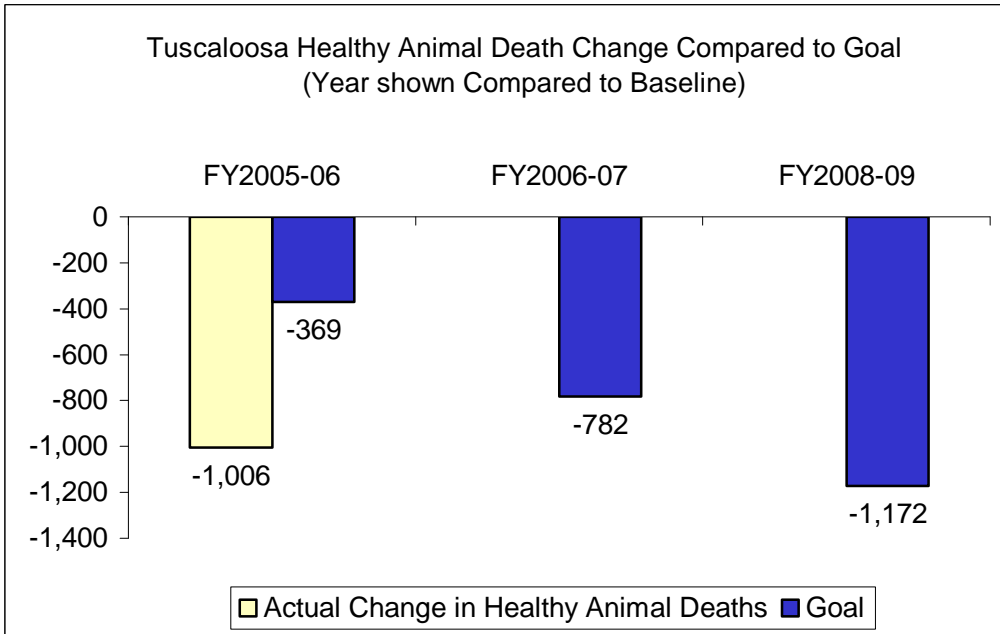
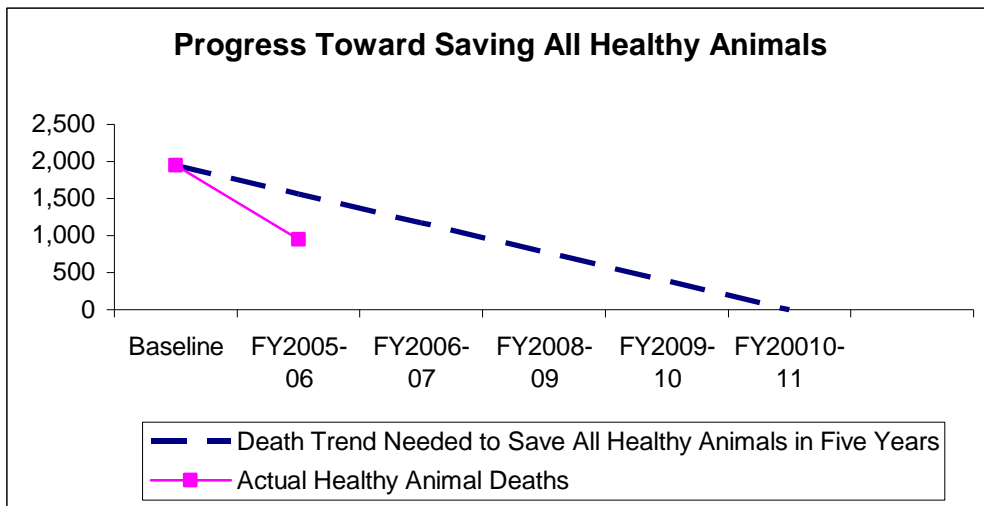


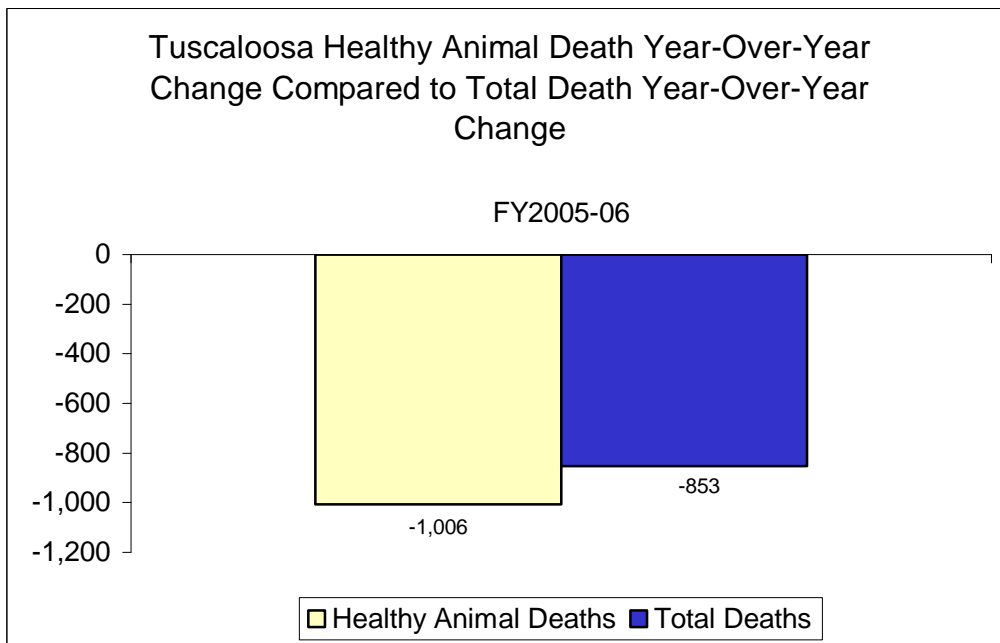
Figure 7

In FY2005-06, the program's first year, the Tuscaloosa County community program was more than halfway towards reaching its five-year goal of reducing all healthy animal deaths (see Figure 8). The County appears to be well-positioned to reaching the goal of eliminating all healthy animal deaths well before the end of five years. While it is likely that the rate of improvement in the death rate will diminish, if it continued at the current rate in the second program year, healthy animal deaths would be eliminated in the second year.



**Figure 8**

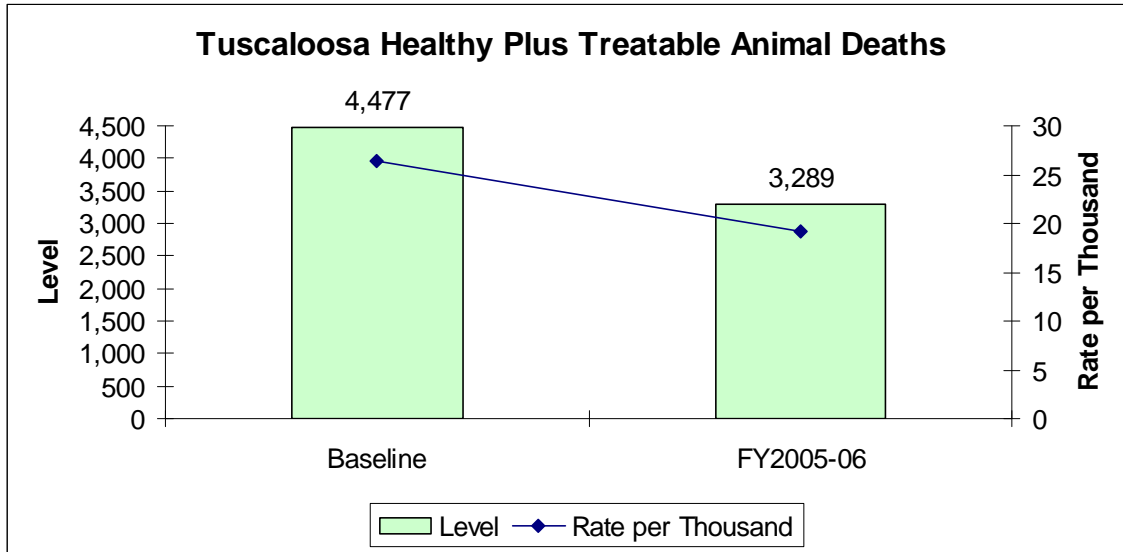
Healthy animal deaths and total deaths both declined by a similar amount in the first program year (see Figure 9).



**Figure 9**

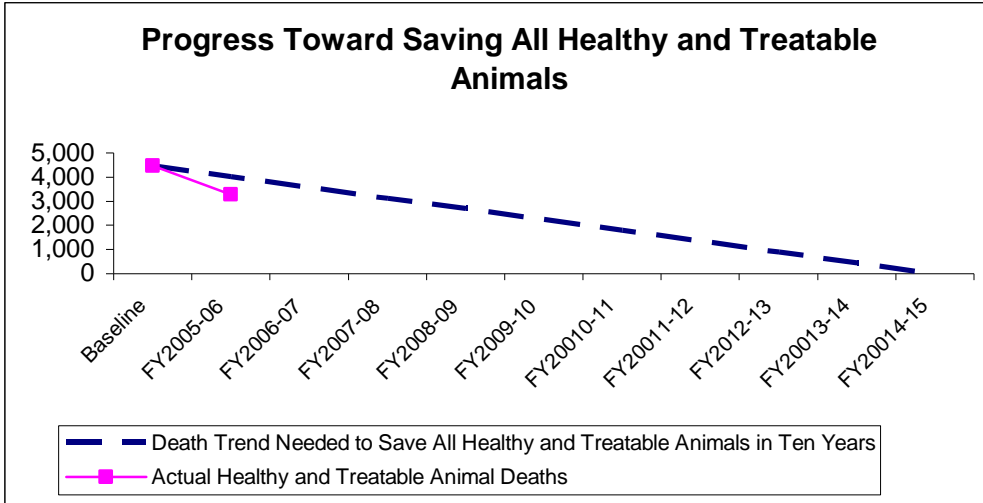
## Healthy and Treatable Animals

Healthy and treatable animals deaths combined declined 26.5% from 4,477 in the baseline period to 3,289 in FY2005-06 (see Figure 10). After accounting for the size of the human population, the deaths of healthy and treatable animals per 1,000 people decline 27.2% between the baseline period and FY2005-06.



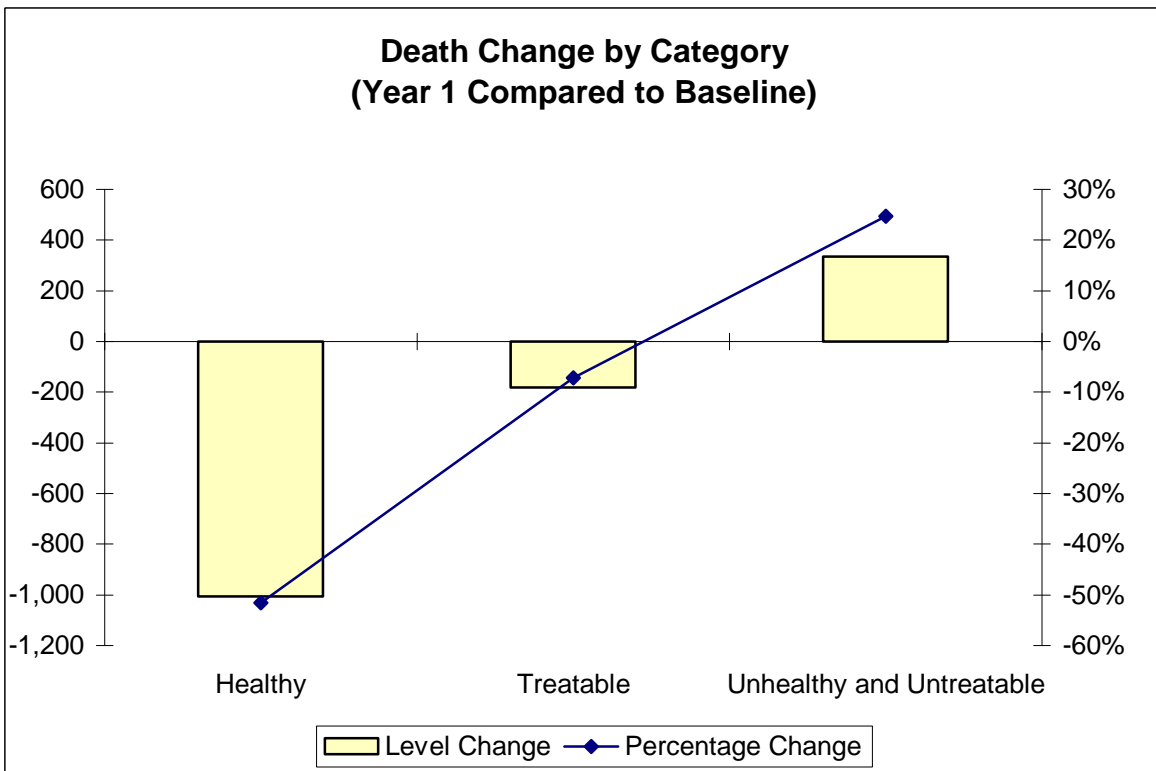
**Figure 10**

Healthy and treatable animal deaths combined are down more than one quarter in just the first year. Therefore, at the current rate of reduction in healthy and treatable animal deaths, these deaths would be eliminated well within the ten year goal period (see Figure 11). In fact, at the current rate it would take only 4 years to eliminate all healthy and treatable animal deaths. However, it is important to note that the Maddie's Fund Tuscaloosa County community program currently targets healthy animal deaths and that treatable animals by definition present more difficult issues than healthy animals. Therefore, the assumption used here that healthy plus treatable deaths could continue to be reduced at the current rate after all healthy animals are being saved without additional resources devoted to treating those animals may be unrealistic.



**Figure 11**

While animal deaths declined for healthy and treatable animals over the program period, the death rate for unhealthy & untreatable animals increased moderately (see Figure 12). Part of the increase in unhealthy & untreatable animal deaths can be attributed to population growth. The cause of the remaining increase in unhealthy & untreatable animal deaths is unknown. It may be due to increased intake of this particular category of animals, other random forces, or changes in the categorization of animals. Data broken down by species indicates that this increase occurred both for dogs and cats.



**Figure 12**

## Adoptions

Adoptions increased 19.7% from 1,253 to 1,500 between the baseline period and the first program year (see Figure 13). After adjusting for the size of the human population, adoptions increased 18.6% from 7.4 animals adopted per 1,000 people to 8.7 animals adopted per 1,000 people.

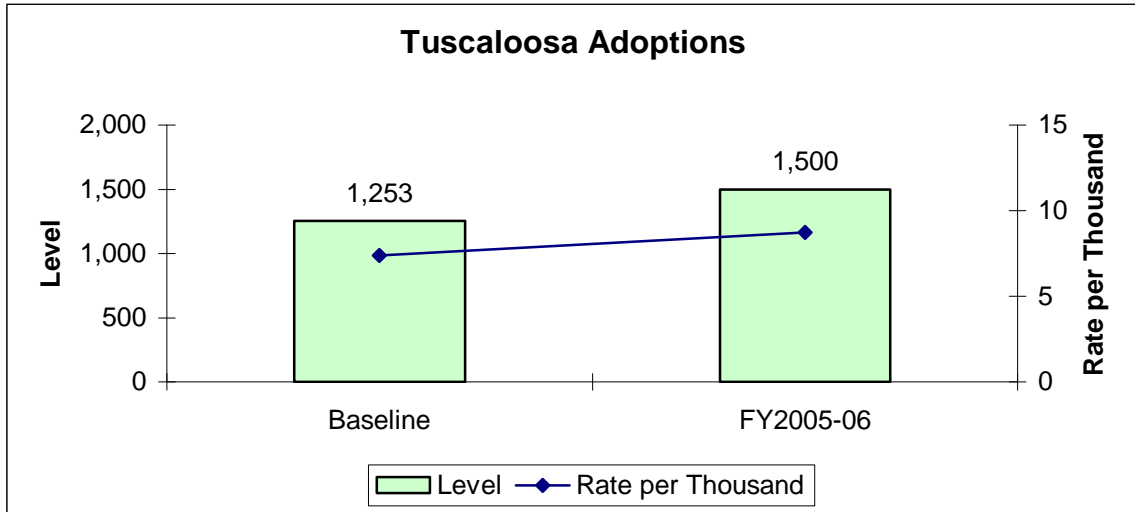


Figure 13

The quarterly data on adoptions indicates that adoptions increased in every quarter compared to the same quarter in the baseline period (see Figure 14).

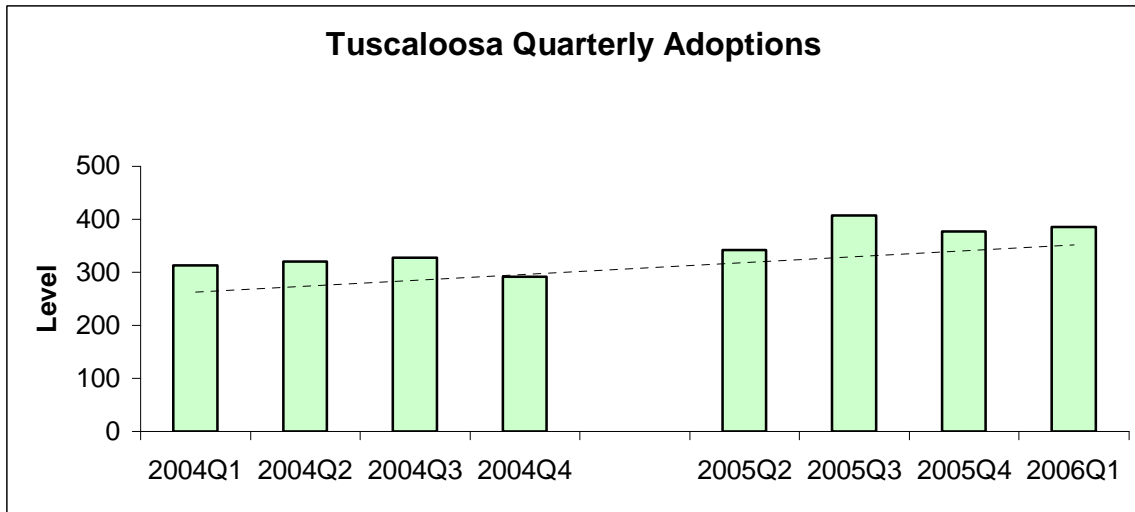
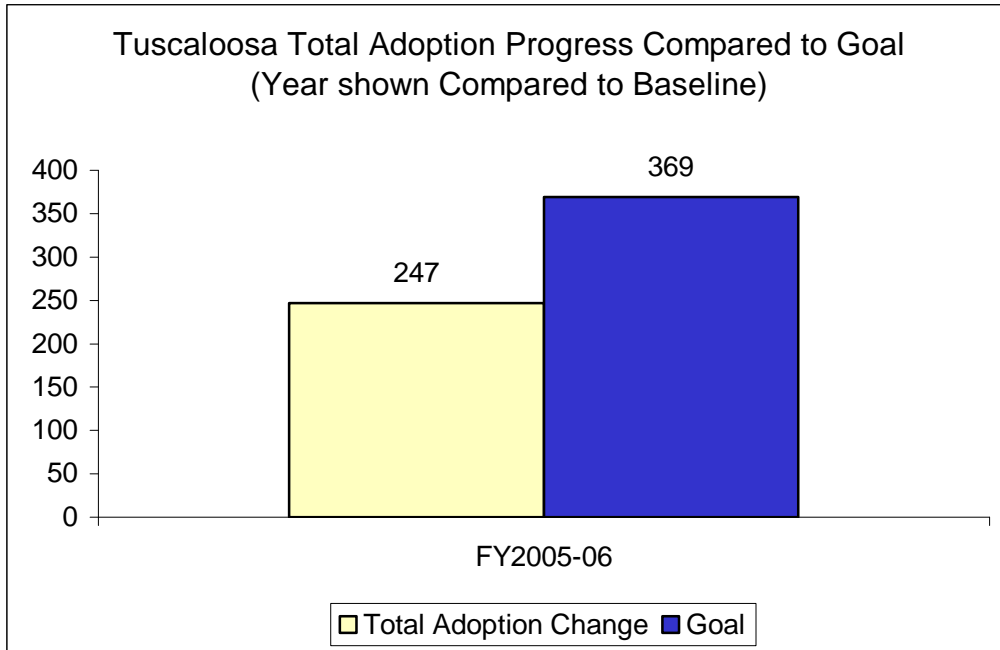


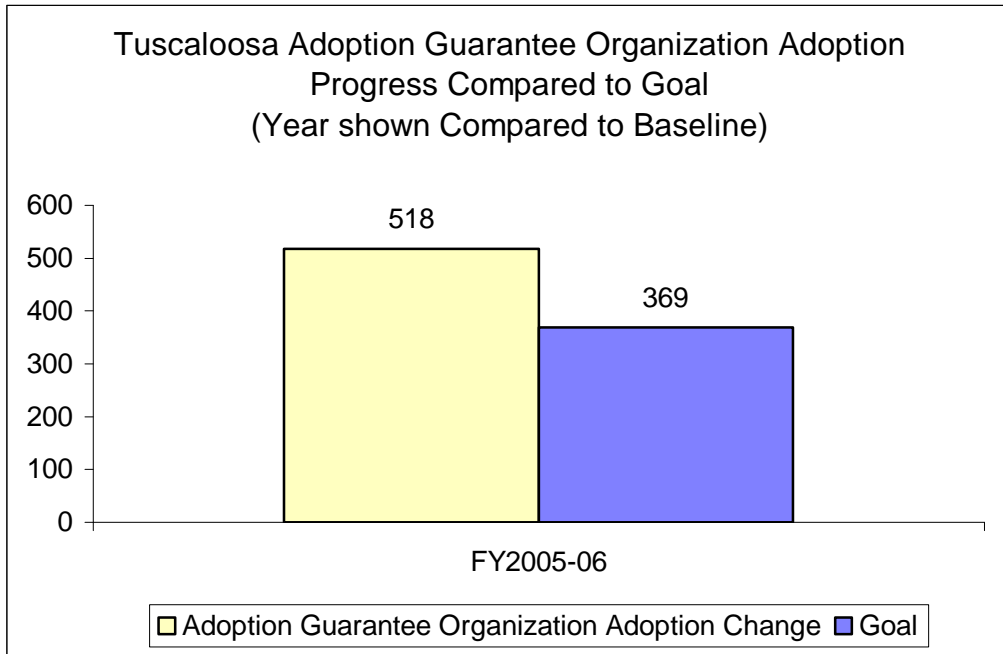
Figure 14

In the first program year, the actual total adoption change compared to the baseline period was short of the adoption goal (see Figure 15). Furthermore, the change in adoptions will have to be approximately double the increase seen in FY2005-06 in order to meet the FY2006-07 goal.



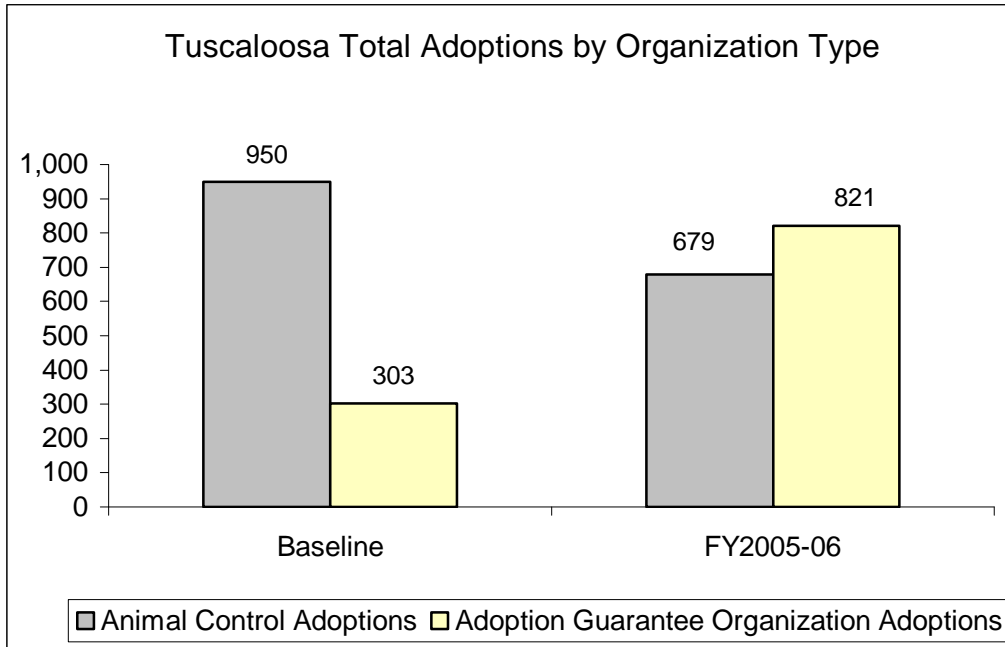
**Figure 15**

While total adoptions fell short of goal, adoption guarantee organizations did their part to raise adoptions. Adoption guarantee organizations exceeded their adoption goal (see Figure 16).



**Figure 16**

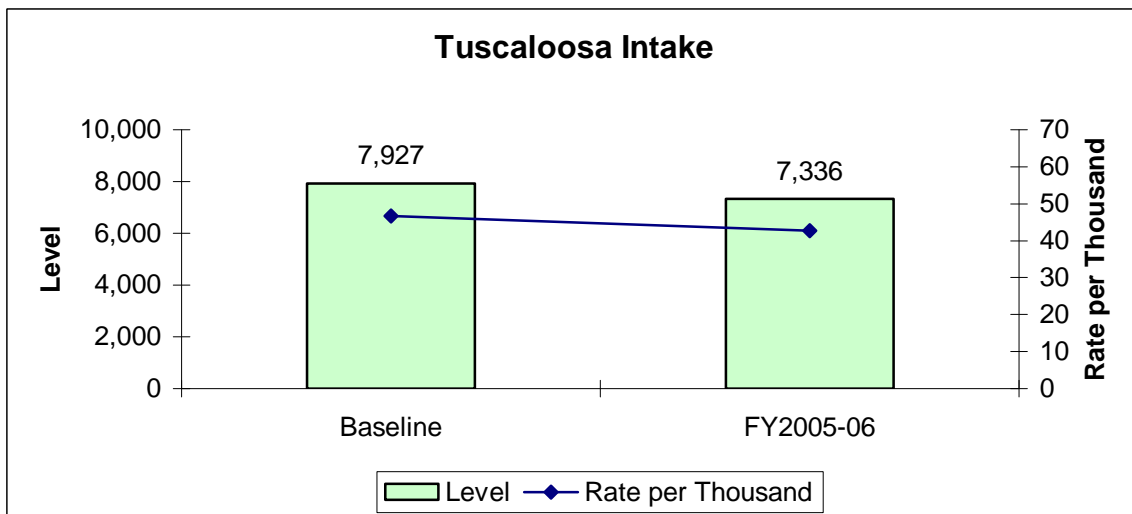
While adoption guarantee organization adoptions more than doubled in the first program year, animal control adoptions decreased compared to the baseline period (see Figure 17). The increase in adoption guarantee organization adoptions was roughly double the decline in animal control adoptions. However, the decline at animal control offset adoption guarantee organization progress enough to cause the total to fall short of the program goal. Within a single year, adoption guarantee organization adoptions jumped from less than a third of animal control adoptions to being larger than animal control adoptions.



**Figure 17**

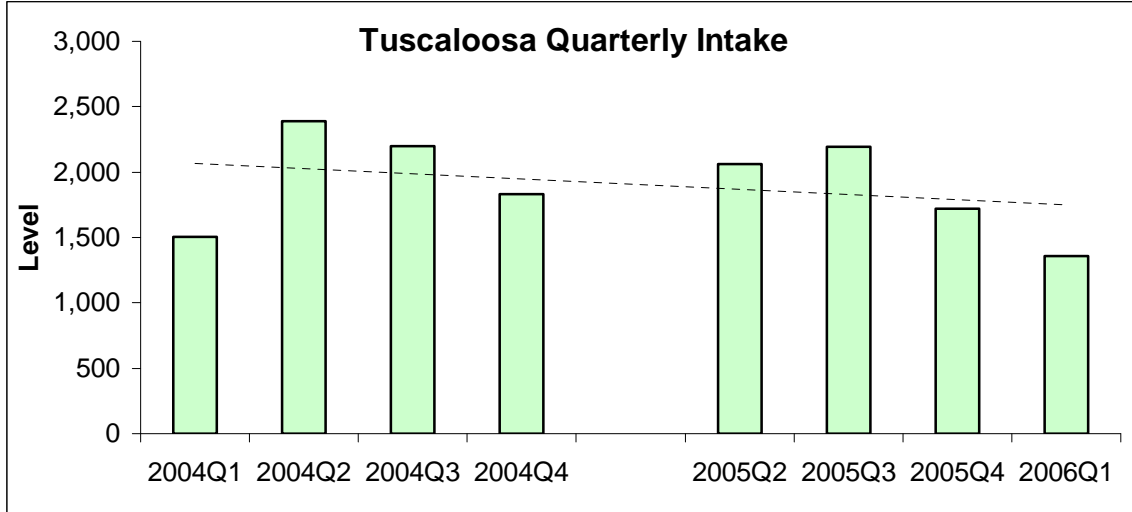
**Total Intake**

Total shelter intake declined 7.5% in the first program year. When adjusted for population growth, intake declined 8.3% in the first program year to 42.8 animals per thousand people (see Figure 18).



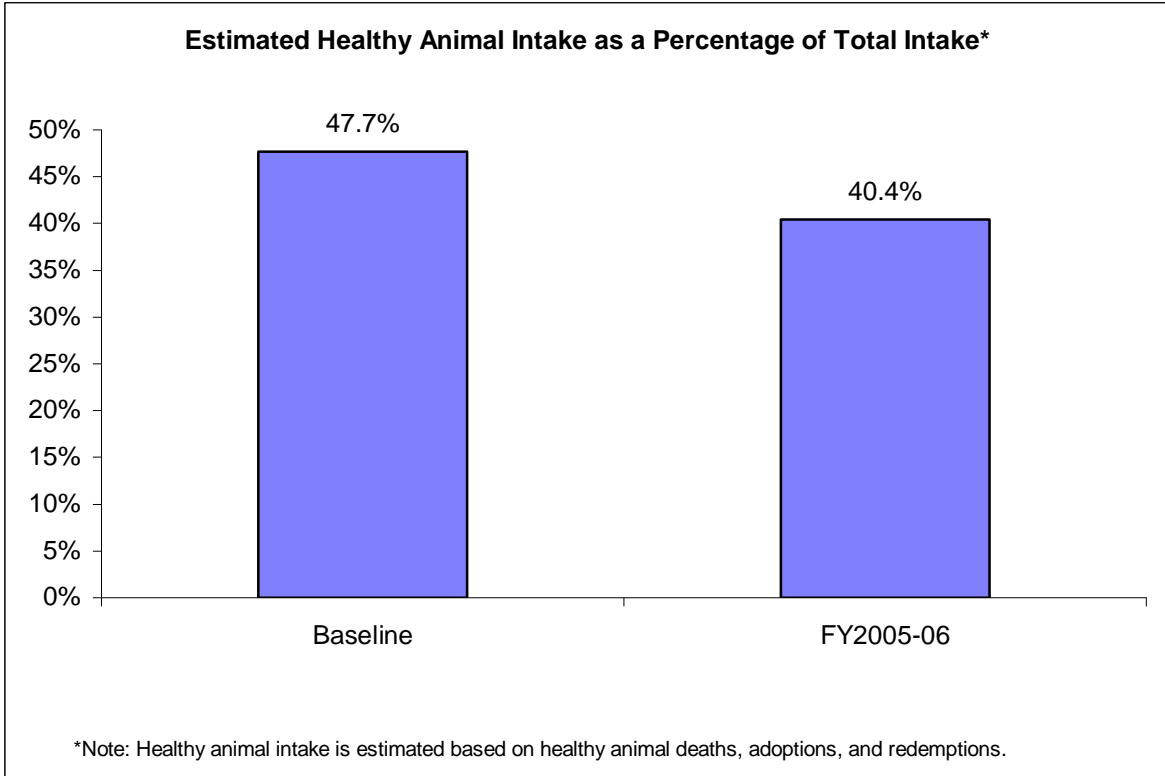
**Figure 18**

Quarterly data supports the finding of a continuing modest declining trend for intake (see Figure 19). Intake was lower in every quarter of FY2005-06 compared to the same quarters of the baseline period. The first quarter of 2006 had the lowest level of intake of any quarter so far in the program, though this was due in large part to seasonal patterns.



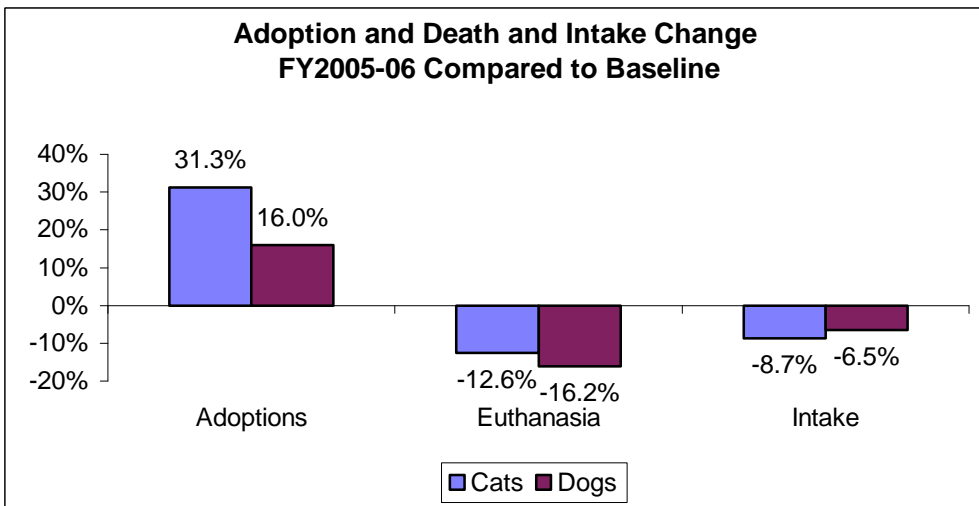
**Figure 19**

Estimated healthy animal intake as a portion of total intake declined from 47.7% to 40.4% (see Figure 20). It is important to note that animal categories are not recorded at the time of intake, so the categorization of animals is estimated based on outcomes. More specifically, healthy animal intake is estimated as healthy animal deaths plus redemptions plus adoptions. However, animals at the shelter can change in their health status over time and adopted/redeemed animals may not always be healthy. To the extent that these two situations occur, the estimate of healthy animal intake may be inaccurate. For example, if due to shelter improvements fewer animals deteriorate in their health condition at the time of euthanasia, this will cause healthy animal intake to appear to increase even if the condition of the animals at the time of intake has not changed.



**Figure 20**

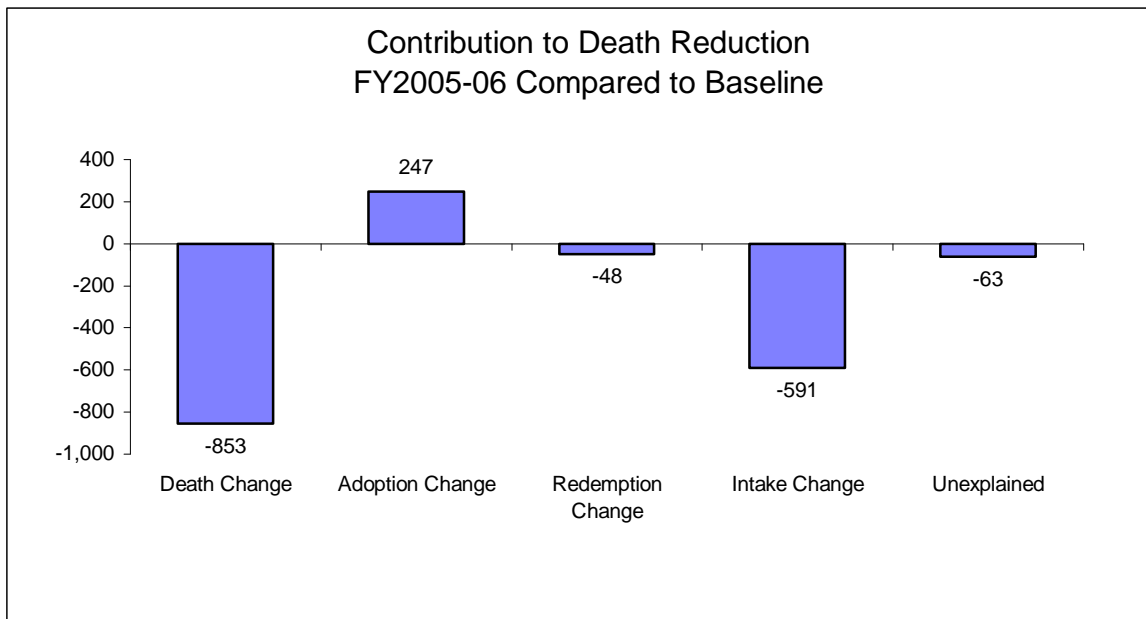
Adoptions increased for both dogs and cats, with cat adoptions increasing faster than dog adoptions (see Figure 21). Both dog and cat death rates declined, with dog death rates declining faster than cats. Intake declined for both cats and dogs. The decline for cats was higher at 8.7% than the decline for dogs, which was 6.5%. It is unclear why cat deaths declined less than dog deaths despite greater improvements for cats in both adoptions and intake. Redemptions cannot explain the difference in death rate change.



**Figure 21**

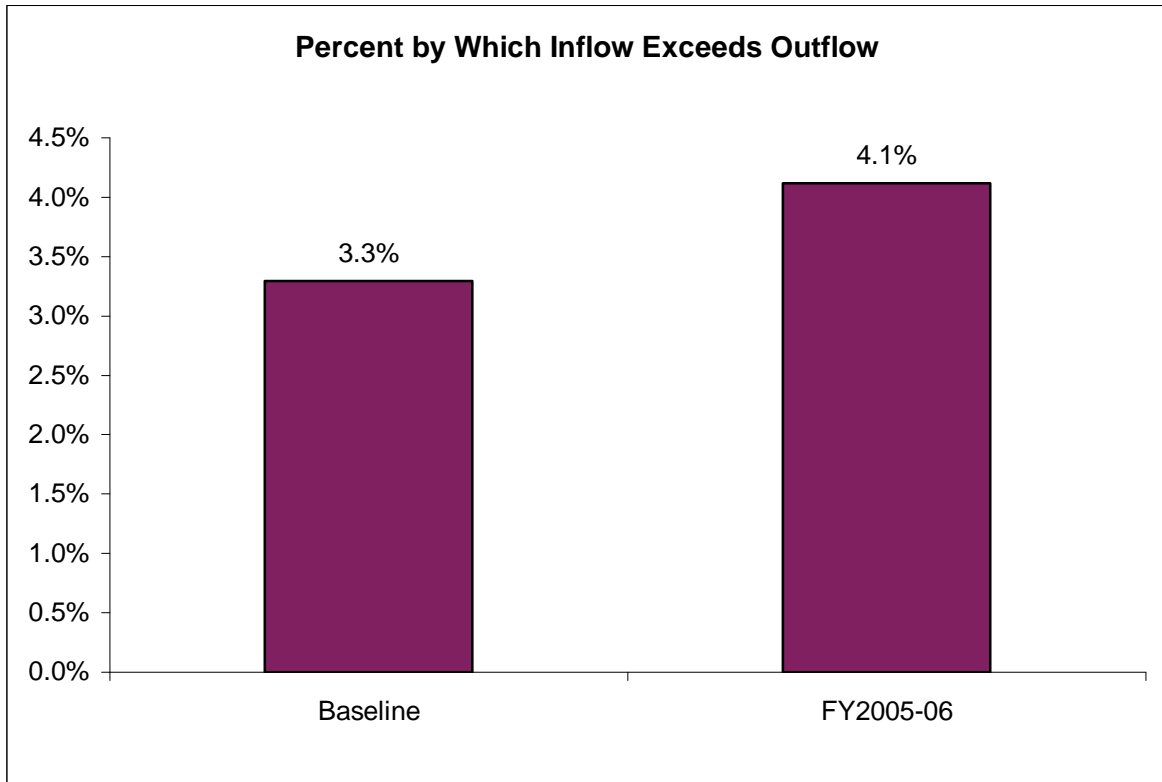
## Sources of Change

The decrease in death over the total program period can mostly be explained by adoption and intake changes (see Figure 22). In particular, declining intake explains the majority (69%) of the decline in the death rate. Increased adoptions can account for 29% of the total death change. Redemptions declined slightly, and therefore explain none of the decline in deaths. Given these component changes, a decline of 63 deaths, or about 7% of the total death change, remains unexplained. This reduction in deaths may be attributable to a reduction in outcomes relative to intake, which is a statistical discrepancy. This type of statistical discrepancy is not uncommon and could be caused by a number of factors such as changes in animal inventory over time, transfers into or out of the region, and data errors.



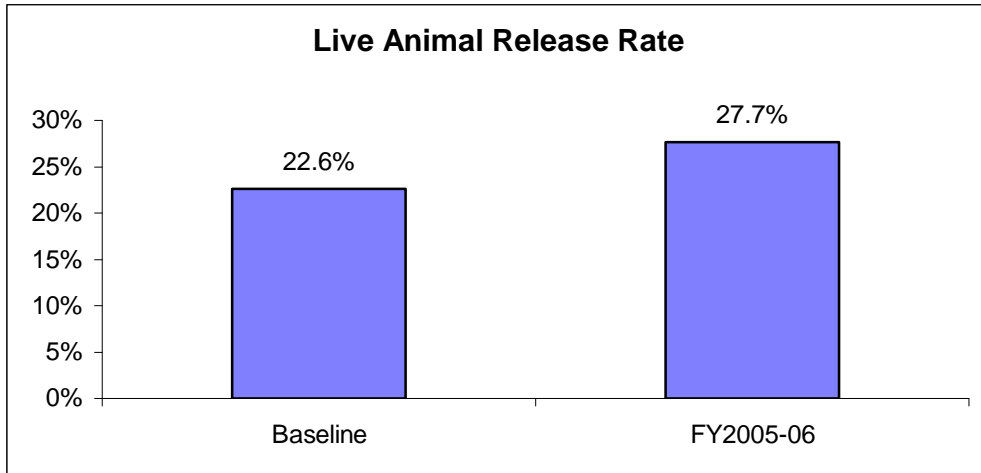
**Figure 22**

The statistical discrepancy can be seen in Figure 23. Initially, the outflow of animals exceeds the inflow by 3.3%. However, this changed slightly in the first program year, with the inflow of animals becoming 4.1% larger than the outflow. This is not necessarily an error. For example, rising levels of fostered animals could cause an increase of animal “inventory”. The difference is large enough to explain the “unexplained” decline in deaths shown in Figure 22. However, the growth in this statistical discrepancy may not be sustainable if it has been caused for example by a buildup of animal inventory.



**Figure 23**

The live animal release rate indicates that the portion of shelter animals that end up with positive outcomes (normally adopted, transferred or redeemed) as opposed to negative outcomes (i.e. killed at the shelter) has grown dramatically. In the baseline period, 22.6% of animals were adopted, transferred or redeemed (see Figure 24). In FY2005-06, the live animal release rate was 27.7%. While this may be lower than shelters in some other regions of the country, it is a substantial improvement from the baseline period's live animal release rate.

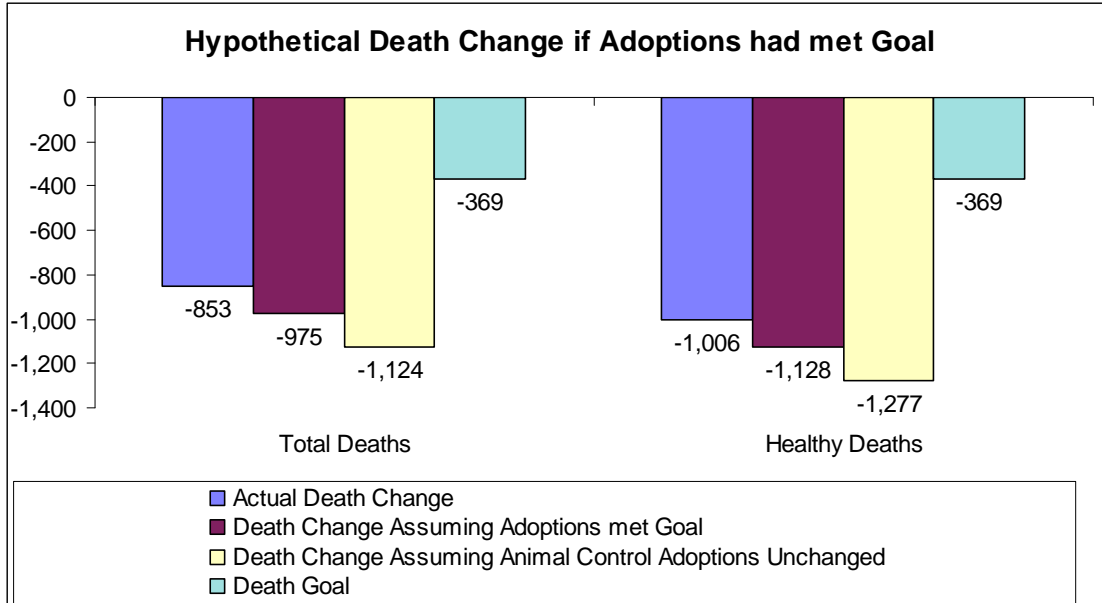


**Figure 24**

## **Conclusions**

The results indicate that Tuscaloosa County exceeded its goals in most categories. The program fell short of its adoption goals, although adoptions at adoption guarantee organizations exceeded their first year goal. Fortunately, the death goals were achieved despite shortfalls in adoptions, due in part to a significant reduction in intake.

As shown in Figure 25, total deaths and healthy death would have made even more progress if the first year's adoption goals were met. If the total adoption goal was met and all other shelter dynamics remained unchanged total deaths would have decline by 975 rather than 853. Furthermore, if animal control adoptions remained unchanged from the baseline period and adoption guarantee organization adoptions had increased at the same rate they actually did, total deaths would have decline by 1,124 rather than 853. Though all death rates exceeded their program goals, getting animal control adoptions back up at least to their baseline level may become important for Tuscaloosa to reach its long-term goals.



**Figure 25**

Tuscaloosa County appears to be well-positioned both to achieve its five-year goal of eliminating all healthy animal deaths and to reach a ten-year goal of eliminating all treatable animal deaths. These goals of course depend on what happens in future program years. In particular, reducing treatable animal deaths may prove more difficult than healthy animal deaths.