



Features

Progress Report:

Joe Cannon, Executive Director, Jacksonville Humane Society

[[Click here](#) to read last February's feature story on Jacksonville.]

Q. When I spoke with you last year, you told me that your move from the Humane Society's Board to the Executive Director position was only temporary. Is that still the case?

A. Yes, in fact my last day is January 31st. My plan was always to oversee the transition to no-kill; to get the organization on solid footing and then leave. I believe I have done that.

Q. Tell me about your year as a no-kill shelter.

A. In our first year, (October 2005 to October 2006), our intake went down from 12,000 dogs and cats to 3,000 – but we are no longer killing animals to make space for more. We euthanized forty animals: six for extreme aggression; thirty-four with serious health issues.

Jacksonville Animal Care and Control planned for an increase of 16,000 animals, but intake went up by only 5,000. We transferred 700 of those animals to our shelter. Currently, 42% of our admissions are coming from ACC -- we will soon reach our target of 50%. As I mentioned last time, our goal is to become a no-kill community, and partnering with AC& C to help get their deaths down is an important component of our work.

I'm happy to report that community-wide, we saw a 17% overall decline in admissions and a 20.3% decline in overall euthanasia.

Q. That's really exciting! Why do you think intakes went down so much?

A. I think several factors are happening simultaneously. First, we have Spay/Jax, a municipally funded spay/neuter program. The program started in 2003, and since that time, we have seen a 7% yearly decline.

There has been a big increase in the public's awareness of pet overpopulation through such venues as the TV show *Animal Planet*. Spay/neuter surgeries and responsible pet ownership increased as a result.

Finally, a lot of media coverage about our move to no-kill allowed us to educate and get the word out. Our message is, you have a responsibility to manage the fertility of your animal, but we'll help. The humane community in Jacksonville offers a variety of free and low-cost spay/neuter programs, including programs for feral cats.



Q. Any disappointments after one year?

A. The only area I'm unhappy with is adoptions. We'll have to figure out why our adoptions leveled off, and then figure out how to turn it around.

Q. Your numbers show a lot of progress but I don't see them posted anywhere—why not do a little bragging?

A. The Jacksonville Humane Society belongs to a community-wide coalition called Partnership for Animal Welfare and Safety (PAWS: <http://www.jaxpaws.org/membership.html>). The group consists of fourteen agencies: an umbrella support organization (First Coast No More Homeless Pets), four animal control agencies, two adoption guarantee groups, one traditional shelter and six rescue groups. First Coast No More Homeless Pets is collecting shelter statistics from all of the groups, using the Asilomar Accords categories and tables. PAWS will publish our community statistics once we work out all of the details with the coalition partners.

Q. Where do you see Jacksonville five years from now?

A. If I had a crystal ball, I would guess we'll see:

- a 15% per year decline in intakes
- a 15% or more decline in euthanasia
- a reduction in deaths to less than 5,000 in five years, compared to the current 19-20,000.

With resources and information, people in Jacksonville will respond—they're not any more or less irresponsible than anywhere else. The vast majority of people really do care.