

### Life for Dogs Living in Shelters



Dogs are often housed singly to prevent injury & disease<sup>1</sup>

Shelter housing likely restricts dogs' ability to engage in speciesspecific behaviors<sup>2</sup>

Shelter noise levels can range from 65-125  $dB^{3,4,5}$  & have been found damaging to dogs' hearing<sup>5</sup>

Wells, 2004) <sup>2</sup>(Taylor & Mills, 2007) <sup>3</sup>(Sales, Hubrecht, Peyvandi, Milligan, & Shield, 1997) <sup>4</sup>(Coppola, Enns, & Grandin, 2006) <sup>5</sup>(Scheifele, Martin, Clark, Kemper, & Wells, 2012)

This lack of control & predictability likely has significant psychological impacts<sup>2</sup>

In all, the novel shelter environment with its sights & sounds, spatial restrictions, limited social contact with dogs & people, & separation from attachment figure(s) may all contribute to decreased welfare<sup>6</sup>

**Why does this matter?** 3.9 million dogs enter shelters each year<sup>7</sup>

As dogs are kenneled longer awaiting homes,<sup>8,9</sup> animal shelters are becoming more like orphanages<sup>10</sup>

(Protopopova, 2016) <sup>7</sup>(ASPCA, 2017) <sup>8</sup>(Wenstrup & Dowidchuk, 1999) <sup>9</sup>(Gu



#### **Improving Shelter Dog Welfare**

Petting has been shown to reduce cortisol is shelter dogs after blood draw<sup>20</sup> – with interventions of petting resulting in less anxie

Less than <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> an hour of walking & human interaction can result in decreased salivary cortisol & improved behavioral scores<sup>22</sup>

Just hanging out, petting or play reduces cortisol & vocalizing & panting) as compared to remaining in kennel or being removed without a person<sup>23</sup> with repeated interactions possibly having greater impact<sup>24</sup> <sup>24</sup>(Hennessy, Williams, Miller, Douglas, & Voith, 1998) <sup>21</sup> (Hennessy et al., 2002) <sup>22</sup>(Mer Carbonell, & López-Rodriguez, 2011) <sup>23</sup>(Shiverdecker, Schiml, & Henness <sup>24</sup>(Coppola, Grandin, & Enns, 2006)

### Fostering is a Human-Animal Interaction Intervention

Presently, little is known about how fostering improves shelter dog welfare - but it's possible that prolonged exposure to humans & reductions in disruptive sounds could reduce stress



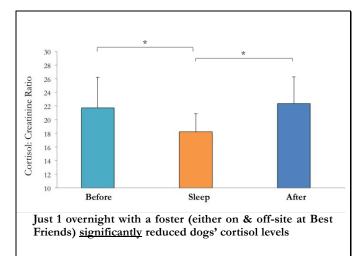
When dogs are adopted from temporary & trial  $adoptions^{25}$  – as well as novel programs, like Adoption Ambassadors

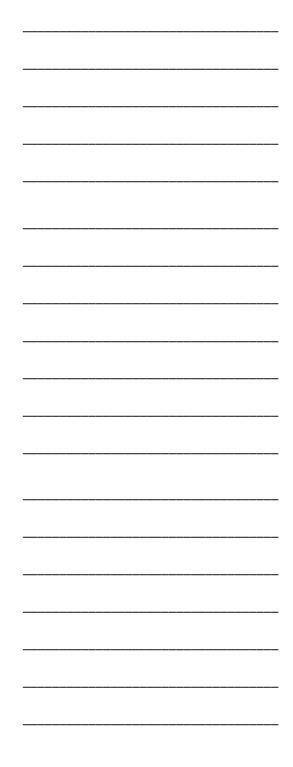
they're returned <u>less</u> frequently than traditionally adopted dogs

AA adopters more often report information from dog's foster was helpful in their decision-making<sup>26</sup>







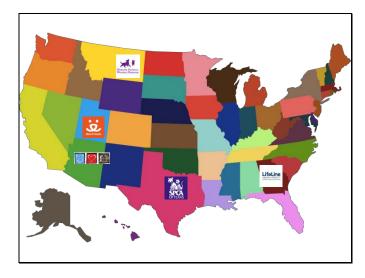


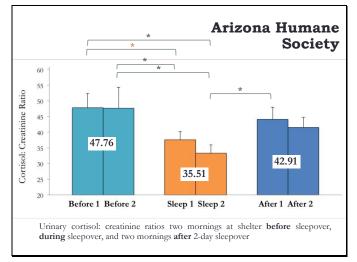
In an effort to learn more about how temporary fostering benefits shelter dogs, we embarked on 4-shelter study across the US

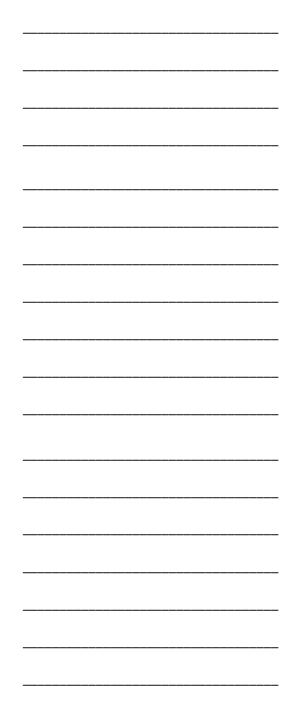
With these shelters, we collected:

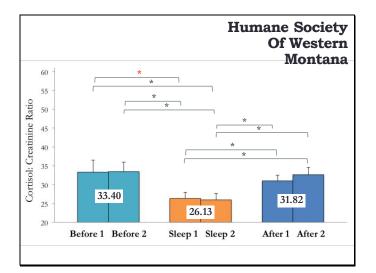
\*More\* urine: 2 days Before, 2 days During, and 2 Days After to learn more about the physiological effects of sleepovers

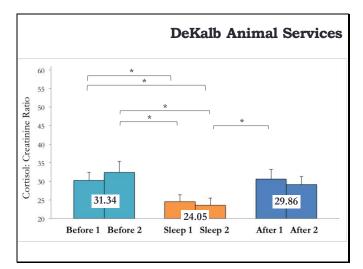


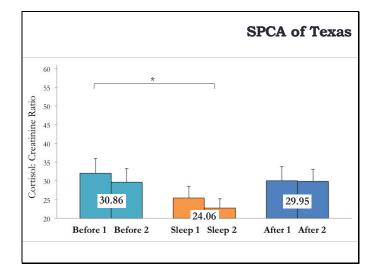


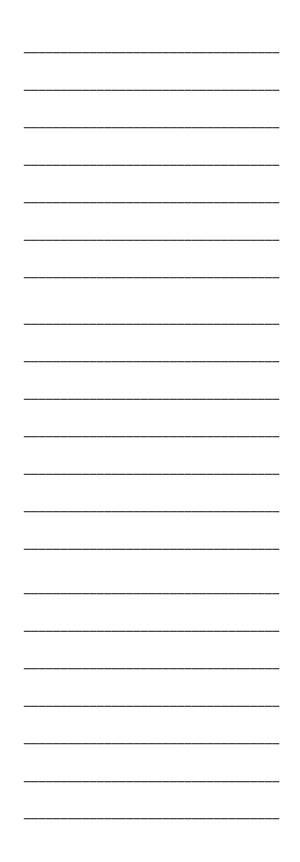












## The Evidence is In!

Our 5 shelters have demonstrated that temporary sleepovers of 1 & 2 nights result in CORT reductions without significant increases upon return compared to baseline shelter levels



### Are There Other **Benefits to Sleepovers?**

Our observations over the course of a year working with five very different shelters, spending one month carrying out data collection with each



# What We Observed Behaviorally

- After sleepovers, dogs were: Less frantic in-kennel More relaxed Less apathetic & more engaged with people

It's possible that there's longer-term behavioral benefits than just cortisol reduction (& maybe they're related!)

Can brief sleepovers preserve behavioral health? Programs like these could be useful for behaviorally health dogs, not just problematic dogs





Some even continued to foster their dogs after study was completed because of dog's need &

good fit in home

And adopted dogs! And so did their friends

## **Turning Up Foster Recruitment**

"I can do anything for a day and a half" – Arizona foster volunteer

Open-ended fostering can be daunting – but **short-term** fostering can:

Allow low barrier to entry to "hook" fosters into longer-term fostering

Capture new group of volunteers & work around their schedule

Assess fosters' likes & dislikes, & abilities



### Overnight/ Weekend Foster Planning

- Who can foster?
- Fosters only, fosters & volunteers, the public?
- Who is available to go?
  - All dogs, dogs with long shelter stays, etc.?
- How can you run the program most efficiently?
- Who can you recruit to help?



### Tailor Your Program to Your Shelter's Needs

#### Fairfax County Animal Shelter

- About 4,500 pets per year
- LOS <14 days
- Less than 2 dozen dogs on the adoption floor at any given time
- Adopts out more pets than it takes in; regularly transfers in pets from other shelters
- Dogs get walked 3-5 times per day

Austin Animal Center

day

- About 18,000 pets per yearSeveral hundred dogs on the
- adoption floor at any given timeDogs get walked 1-3 times per

#### Overnight/ Weekend Foster Logistics: Austin

- Current volunteers and fosters can participate
- Process is managed by customer service personnel, just like an adoption
- Very little added work for foster coordinators
- Dogs can be overnight/weekend fostered anytime





## Weekend Foster Logistics: Fairfax

- Shelter closes on Saturday at 5pm; reopens Tuesday at 12 pm
- Program is open to volunteers & fosters
- Candidates for weekend foster are chosen several days in advance and an email is sent out. If those dogs aren't adopted by Saturday at 5pm, they will be available for weekend foster.

### Weekend Foster Logistics: Fairfax

- At 4:30pm on Saturdays, weekend fosters arrive to pick up pets
- Foster assistant answers questions and helps to gather needed supplies
- Paperwork is signed
  Dogs can be returned Sunday evening through Tuesday morning, depending on foster's availability

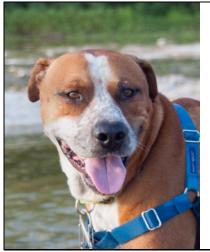
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#### IRL (In Real Life) at Humane Rescue Alliance



- Purpose of program:To gather out-of-shelter
  - To gather out-of-shelter information on their medium and large dogs
  - To recruit and build the confidence of fosters for big dogs
- Targets dogs with long shelter stays, seniors and those exhibiting signs of shelter stress
- Emphasis on data collection

#### Foster Sleepovers: How Temporary Fostering Can Improve the Lives of Shelter Dogs



#### **Supplies**

- Martingale collars
- Foster tags
- 1-2 types of harnesses
- Carabiners
- Sturdy leashes
- Ziploc bags of the food the dogs have been eating
- "Weekend foster"
  laminated kennel signs
- "Adopt me" vests, bandanas, or leashes
- CratesBowls, treats, toys, etc.

