Thank you for being here!

TODAY'S LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• Articulate the kitten challenge in North America. Specifically, what do kittens need from us and how many kittens need it.
• Identify the most successful kitten management strategies and understand how and why these strategies are successful.
• Define your shelter's kitten philosophy and goals. Engage your community in your kitten strategy.

What does diversion mean?

• To change course from one direction to another

To admit or not to admit?

KITTEN INTAKE CONSIDERATIONS FOR ANIMAL SHELTERS

Dr. Kate Hurley, DVM, MPVM
I (we) meant well

- Get lost cats home!
- Find homes for cats that need them!
- Prevent suffering!
- Reduce overpopulation!

But then I (we) learned more

- Get lost cats home!
- Find homes for cats that need them!
- Prevent suffering!
- Reduce overpopulation!

The right tool for the job

- Sterilize, vaccinate and return for most healthy unowned cats brought to the shelter1
- Make feral cats stable populations in the community and limit euthanasia at the shelter
- Make friendly stray/free roaming cats to maximize spayed/neutered/vaccinated cats reunited with their families
- As an avenue to open doors with community members who would not otherwise go to the shelter

1Refers to 728Q low-cost spay/neuter

- Traditional shelter pathway for owner surrendered cats2 and:
  - Social kittens on a pathway to adoption
  - Unhealthy stray/free roaming cats (sick/injured/poor body condition)
  - Cruelty, abuse and neglect cases
  - Interventions for significant nuisance situations/public health or wildlife risk
  - As an avenue to open doors with community members and encourage engagement with the shelter

2When pet safety net/home to home options are not appropriate
It worked!

- Euthanasia down 75%
- Euthanasia due to LIF down 59%
- Cats picked up from streets down 29%

It worked, really, really well

- 11,769 cats sterilized and rehomed over 3-year period
- Euthanasia down 69%
- Cats for adoption picked up down 26%
- Median down 38%

The Final Frontier
But what about the babies?

Let’s switch gears

Oh no!
Officer Hurley to the rescue!
It’s like they read my mind!

Help, I’ve found a baby crow!

You’re walking along the sidewalk when suddenly you notice a small, fluffy little bundle of black feathers trying to scurry to hide under a bush or tree. When you begin to approach the young crow, it struts smartly up to your feet or perhaps continues its poorly planned scurry down the sidewalk or worse, into traffic. The sight of this baby crow seems to conjure a host of mixed emotions. Your instinct (and perhaps the opportunity to interact with a baby animal) are tempting you to intervene and “save” this young other-than-adult. If you were to be out this time, what should you do?

Uh oh...

The answer, almost always, is to ignore your instincts and good intentions. I’ve had many friends and colleagues who are either licensed wildlife rehabilitators or who have spent years volunteering with their local animal facilities, that can attest to the dozens of animals that get brought in during the spring and summer by well-intentioned folks who assumed that simply finding such a vulnerable baby meant it needed help. In many of these cases, these animals did not need help and now they’ve been separated from their parents or mother and stand a much lower chance of survival once they’re released from the rehab facility. So here do you avoid making the same error?

Oh my

First, understand that many babies very often leave the nest before they are completely fledged (usually by about 4-5 weeks). Evolution has taught them that it’s better to be fledged but still hide than on the ground than to wander in the nest where they stand no chance of escape. Should they be located by a predator... During this time they receive the care of their parents until they are able to feed and fly with them. Feeding a fledgling baby crow or any is simply normal, but when it meets between late May and July. Perhaps it would be helpful to politely feed the fledgling away from traffic and under the shelter of a bush but, outside of that, most baby crows do not need and not to be taken care of if you see them in a wild field.
Yep.

But what about this???

80% nestling mortality by one month of age
How to really be a hero

• The main thing to remember is: as long as the baby is mostly feathered and being attended by its parents, it’s just where it needs to be. Only if it’s trapped in a storm drain, naked, injured, cornered by a cat, or after several hours has not been visited by its parents is it appropriate to intervene. Even in most of those cases, simply creating a makeshift nest out of a basket and securing it to a tree, or placing the baby in a bush and leaving the area, is much better than taking it away to a facility.
Wow it’s true

What does that have to do with these?

Understanding a prolific species
Understanding a prolific species

"If you take a mythical cat... and let her and her offspring reproduce at the theoretical rate over 18 years... you'd have a cat population of nearly 50 trillion. If each cat weighed, on average, five pounds, this catastrophically huge feline colony would weigh 120 billion tons."

Risk by design

- Many species have a relatively large number of offspring and low survival
- Evolutionary strategy allowing rapid adaptation to changes in resource availability and density
- Breed to the carrying capacity of the environment

But not quite the same

- Exist in the wild
- Exist as pets
- Feeding often supplemented
- Reproduction can be surgically controlled
- Publicly and privately funded adoption, relocation and euthanasia programs are common
And definitely not our way

How do we bend this curve?

Here’s what won’t work
Here’s what might work

Think upstream

Work in balance with capacity

See pros and false dichotomies

Recognize human emotions

What’s the smartest place to invest resources?

We define preventable deaths as those that could likely be reduced or eliminated using an alternative population management approach, specifically the deaths of kittens under six months that fail to reach adulthood, and the deaths of adult cats due to lethal management.

And the winner is...

Cumulative preventable deaths and cumulative kitten deaths over 10 years are much lower for higher-intensity sterilization (TNR) than for all other scenarios.
“Never let a kitten intake go to waste”

Balance need and capacity

Prioritize shelter and foster support resources for highest need
Replace false dichotomies with win/win solutions

- The kittens and cats they don’t come into the shelter!
- Some admission shelters can’t normally accept animals how fast they come!
- This is our only chance to provide the moms!

Can you provide room with food, water and shelter where she is?

All our foster homes are full right now. Can we help you hang onto these for a few days?

Can you care for room until the kittens are weaned and then bring her in?

Basic principles

- Kittens are better off with their mother and mothers are better off with their kittens until the kittens are old enough for weaning.
- Social cats and kittens are better off in homes than in cages — even really nice cages!
- Un-social community cats may be better off with a little help staying safe outside than stressed inside a home.
- Shelters are the place to triage sick and injured kittens, facilitate adoption of friendly weaned kittens, and provide spay/neuter services.

But what about the human emotion?

- Understand the deep roots of the human desire to protect little ones
- But remember that mother cats have been subject to the same evolutionary pull
- Know that you won’t make all the people happy all the time
- Might as well be criticized for doing the right thing!

8/6/20 Maddie’s Fund | Million Cat Challenge
What about the human emotion?

- Validate people’s impulse towards heroism
- Some of us are no exception ;-) 
- Explain from the cat and kittens’ perspective in simple clear language
- Give people positive steps to take no matter what
- A link to campaign resources will be emailed with your OnDemand link

The Feline Superhighway

- Fast track all your kittens to adoption if they are social
- Fast track all your adult cats to RTF if they are healthy

Kitten care resources for your volunteers and adopters
- Easy peasy foster recruiting: Connect with volunteers that want to foster and area already preparing!
Everyday shelter pricing - average 25% off MSRP (even more on large bags)

Crown Credit Rewards - where you can earn free food every quarter - Free shipping - no orders - no minimums/no contracts. (You buy as much or as little as you need)

Exclusive large sized bags - 17lb Mother and Babycat and 30lb Kitten bags at massive savings

More special discounts and promotions

If you're currently buying your Royal Canin Mother and Babycat products in store or through online retailers,

Sign up for a Royal Canin shelter account and start feeding more kittens with your existing food budgets.

Best part, if you're new to Royal Canin, use code SAVE20 on your first order over $400 and save 20% off your first order! Expires at the end of 2020.

Royal Canin Crown Partners for Shelters and Rescues:

Designed especially for shelter and rescue, Royal Canin Crown Partners program gives access to all the innovative Health Nutrition formulas with many great perks including...

Thank you, Maddie’s Fund!

Join us next week, same day, same time, same channel.

Next week: Support for Kittens in the Field

Supporting kittens and their families starts before they show up on your intake counter. Find out what field officers, volunteers and fosterers are doing to give kittens the best chance of survival while streamlining operations and expanding safety nets outside shelter walls.

Join us on Thursday, August 13 at 12n Pacific / 3pm Eastern for a 60-minute presentation and plenty of time for Q&A with Million Cat Challenge co-founder Dr. Julie Levy.