

Advocate spreads hope for shelter animals

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An animal welfare advocate said shelters need to challenge the notion that they have to kill friendly, reasonably healthy dogs and cats to keep them from being overrun with animals.

Nathan Winograd, a former shelter director in San Francisco, told a crowd of about 200 people Thursday night at Harris Hall in the Lane County Administration building that a shelter running at peak efficiency can find homes for almost all stray and abandoned animals, as well as feral cats.

Winograd said the "no-kill" approach can be adopted in Lane County.

The first order of business in a no-kill community is establishing a low-cost, high-volume spay-and-neuter clinic, Winograd said.

"It would work here because you have a large homeowner demographic, a progressive community and a groundswell of support witnessed by the number of people here tonight," said Winograd, who currently serves as president of the consulting firm No Kill Solutions based in San Clemente, Calif.

advertisement Winograd ran the Tompkins County shelter in Ithaca, N.Y., from 2000 to 2003 to prove that his no-kill policy could work in a rural community. He brought the agency's kill rate to the lowest in the nation: 1.9 cats and dogs per 1,000 residents.

And the no-kill approach is cost effective, he said.

His costs for holding a cat the minimum number of days, cleaning its kennel, killing the animal and getting rid of the carcass was \$100. But the cost of sterilization was \$25.

The drive toward increasing the number of no-kill shelters began in 1994, after Richard Avanzino, the director of the San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, tore the decompression chamber - now seen as a hideous way to kill animals - out of his shelter.

Today, San Francisco has the lowest rate of shelter killings for a large city at 2.5 animal deaths per 1,000 residents. By comparison, the Lane County rate is 10 dog and cat deaths per 1,000 residents per year.

The government-run Lane County Animal Regulation Authority and the nonprofit Greenhill Humane Society killed about 3,400 dogs and cats by lethal injection last year, statistics show. This amounts to 52 percent of the cats and 16 percent of the dogs that passed through the shelter doors.

Johnni Prince, executive director of Greenhill, said Winograd brought up some valid challenges facing shelter operators.

"We could do more if we had more resources," Prince said.

The Florence Area Humane Society went no-kill in 2000, but it limits its intake of animals that have complicated medical or behavioral issues. Still, the shelter killed 24 sick kittens and puppies last year.

"No-kill is certainly a viable solution," said Sandra Raykin, Florence Area Humane Society shelter manager. "I'm excited that Lane County is going toward that."

Winograd said Lane County can either seize the opportunity to adopt a no-kill approach or maintain the status quo. "But in the end, no-kill is inevitable," he said.