

An Inside View of Animal Control:

What Really Happens to Your Dogs & Cats That End Up in the Pound

Author: Jenny Gott, [Peace of Mind, Body & Soul](#)

Contributors: Casey Voss, Kourtney Rose, [Wags & Whiskers of Minnesota](#) Volunteers

Do you ever wonder where "rescue dogs" come from? Wags & Whiskers Animal Rescue of Minnesota gets asked all the time, "Can you help this dog/cat?" Or, "Can you take my pet? I'm moving and I can't bring them with." One of the more difficult ones they get is, "Our shelter is full, can you help us?" Unwanted pets are saved by rescues. This includes strays, abandoned animals found tied to trees, left in backyards or homes, dumped in dumpsters or dropped at a local shelter. Do you think this doesn't really happen or you can't imagine someone would be cruel and dismissive to a family companion? Think again. It happens every minute of every day. Let's take a closer look...



Rest in Peace sweet Hollywood. I am sorry I could not save you in time. My heart is still breaking.

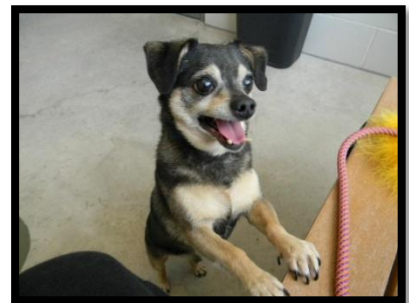
Animal Control

These are the faces of innocent dogs locked behind bars. This is animal control. This is only one snap shot, of one page, of one shelter, in one city. There are millions more. According to the ASPCA, approximately five million to seven million companion animals enter animal shelters nationwide every year, and approximately three million to four million are euthanized (60% of dogs and 70% of cats). With breeders, pet owners, and stray animals that are not fixed, there is always an abundance of unwanted animals that end up in animal control. These poor animals end up behind bars through no fault of their own. The shelter/animal control cats and dogs are usually living in small cages, on cold concrete floors with no interaction with other animals. They seldom get out for bathroom breaks and have little human contact mostly due to the amount of animals the shelter has and the available staff and/or volunteers if the shelter has a volunteer program. Often

times, only minimal medical treatment is provided. Any animal that comes in to the facility injured must wait – in pain, suffering - for a rescue to pull them to get proper medical care. There are exceptions to the rules and animal control does quarantine those animals that have contagious diseases and provide what care they are able. Animal control is a holding facility, defined as "an office or department responsible for enforcing ordinances relating to the control, impoundment and disposition of animals." Animal control is usually run by the city, on a lean budget and according to the governing laws. They are not a rescue, adoption facility or re-homing service for your companions.

Inside The Bars: The Beginning

Rules, regulations, and processes change city to city, but this is a small glimpse into how it works. Once admitted the animal is given a "holding period" in which the owner could re-claim their dog or cat. According to the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy (NCPSP), less than 2% of cats and only 15 to 20% of dogs are returned to their owners. Most of the animals reclaimed were identified with tags, tattoos or microchips, which has helped find the pet-parents. Some are fortunate, but more often than not, these animals never see their families again. Many will never feel the sun on their face, run in the grass, sleep in a safe or comfortable place again or feel the embrace of a human they love...ever again. This is often referred to as death row. It is estimated that approximately 3.7 million animals were euthanized in the nation's shelters in 2008. These statistics from 2008 are only growing, despite the efforts of rescues at this point due to a large number of puppy mills, irresponsible breeding and careless pet ownership. The numbers are not growing as fast because of the



Ralph was saved by Wags & Whiskers. He's now looking for a furever home.

An Inside View of Animal Control:

What Really Happens to Your Dogs & Cats That End Up in the Pound

efforts and impact rescues are making, but they need more help. This number represents a generally accepted statistic that is widely used by many animal welfare organizations, including the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). The road ends in animal control for millions of animals a year, but not for all.

Local Rescues & Animal Control Team Up

Local animal rescues team with some animal control facilities that are open to it. Together, they have made great strides in helping save the lives of many deserving animals. While we should cheer the fact that the individuals, rescues and animal control have and are making a difference, there's still so much more to do. If we could all do our part: be a responsible pet owner, spay/neuter, and for those with a strong love and compassion for animals, perhaps you can find it in your heart to volunteer. There are many, many options to volunteering:

- Help socialize dogs while they are in animal control
- Give them time out of their kennel
- Provide companionship
- Update the public about the available animals
- Financial donations/pledges to help save a cat or dog
- Align yourself with a rescue that is authorized to pull from your local animal control
- Foster
- Be an advocate to help pass laws in your community for the better care and protection of the animals
- Educate the public (it could be as simple as passing this article on)
- Donate supplies to the rescue: food, vetting, blankets, dishes, crates collars and leashes
- Adopt your next companion
- Spay/neuter your next dog or cat (HELP prevent the overpopulation problem!)



Kirby, another dog saved from animal control. Him & his big personality are available for adoption through Wags!

These are just a few things you can do. Look at the faces of the helpless animals that society – we humans – have put there. Look. Feel. Become aware of the fear, pain & sorrow we have induced upon them. I beg of you to be part of the solution and help in any way you can.



Paul, yet another dog saved by Wags! Check out his profile and updated pictures. He's cuter and happier now that he's in foster care looking for his new family!

Release to Rescue

So, what's next for these dogs available for release after their holding period at your local animal control? Those shelters that work with rescues provide a small window of time for these animals to be placed in foster care. This could be 24 hours or 36 hours, depending on capacity and the cat/dog's physical and mental state. If an animal is not reclaimed by their owner and is releasable to a rescue, the approved rescues must determine if they can pull the animal. In order for a rescue to be able to pull a cat or dog from death row, first they must have an open foster home. This does NOT mean someone saying they can foster the dog temporarily or someone that's not approved to say they want the dog, or someone that says they'll be able to foster next week. Rescues need an approved foster that day. That moment. For those lucky dogs that homes are available, they will get the second chance in life that we all hope for them.

An Inside View of Animal Control:

What Really Happens to Your Dogs & Cats That End Up in the Pound

You see, most rescues do not have physical shelters so they have to rely on volunteers who offer their homes for an animal to stay until adopted. There is no area to hold the animal until a foster home opens or until someone can meet the dog and determine if he would fit into their family for adoption. Foster homes are the life line of rescues. Many people are foster families, and many of them cry over seeing pictures of healthy, happy dogs that they were unable to save simply because they did not have room in their home. These volunteers take it personally, as do the rescues. They try with vigilance to save those animals they can, but they always need more help. With volunteers, with foster homes, with people like YOU, these animals are given a second chance at life! When you look into these faces, their big eyes silently plead with you to set them free. How can you say no?



Rest in Peace Duke. We were all routing for you and our hearts hurt for you.

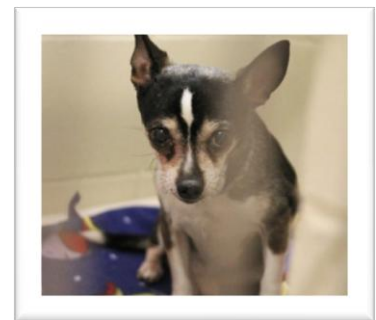
Not Everyone Makes It Out

Those animals in holding that cannot find rescues, meaning open foster homes, to take them in are euthanized. This is real. It is really that simple, that concrete, that black and white. This happens every single day – actually, it happens approximately 32,000 times per day in the United States alone. It happens here in Minnesota, in Minneapolis, in Apple Valley, in Coon Rapids, Edina and every other suburb. I encourage you to look at the [Rainbow Bridge album](#) from the local Minneapolis Animal Control – a loving memorial for those that did not make it. But, know you can help make a difference and rescues are making a difference. Wags & Whiskers Animal Rescue of Minnesota provides food, crates, vetting and miscellaneous items such as leashes and collars. The only thing foster families provide is a loving environment for the cat or dog to stay until he or she is adopted. Rescues such as Wags & Whiskers Animal Rescue of Minnesota have wonderful volunteers, foster homes and advocates. They still need more.

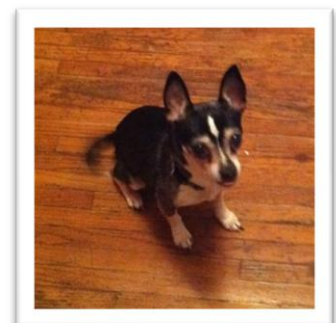
Inside the Bars: The Clock Ticks

If you noticed earlier, the length of time a dog is kept in holding is minimal. You might ask why. Couldn't animal control give rescues more time? Yes, sometimes they do give more time and they try when possible to give rescues a chance to save the animal, but there are many factors. One being the capacity of the physical shelter – once full, animal control must make room for more incoming animals. Sadly, this means, others will die for it. Again, it is that simple – a numbers game. By no means am I saying these animals are just statistics, they are not. Not to the rescues, not to the volunteers and not to animal control. But they become one when the shelter is full. Also, with long term "kenneling" or separation of a "family" pack, a dog begins to mentally and emotionally deteriorate. It becomes unacceptable and inhumane to merely provide for the physical health and needs of dogs in shelters when these signs become evident. As the days pass, the animal's stress level increases, anxiety onsets and well-being of the dog is affected. Shelters can no longer hope for more adoptions as the days pass by and the dogs deteriorate mentally and physically. This information is not dramatized –the hope in sharing it is to help educate you on the reality of the situation. It is key that rescues act quickly in conjunction with animal control. Here is just a glimpse of the symptoms and warning signs of a shelter dog that is losing its mental state:

Repetitive behaviors



Leonard made it out safe from animal control thanks to Wags & Whiskers Animal Rescue of MN. Before, above and after, below.



An Inside View of Animal Control:

What Really Happens to Your Dogs & Cats That End Up in the Pound

- Spinning, circling
- Pacing
- jumping, leaping and bounding on and off walls

Self-Mutilating behaviors

- excessive licking
- lick sores
- flank sucking

Overall appearance

- inability to gain or maintain weight
- deteriorating coat quality
- pressure sores
- disgusting odor
- remains depressed and shows no signs of adjusting (especially in pampered dogs)
- dog seems to have "given up", looks hopeless



This is Henry, a loveable senior Pitte saved from MACC, currently in a Foster-to-Adopt home. Our paws are crossed!

This is what rescuers see every day. "It truly breaks our hearts that we can't save them all. They didn't ask for this. That is why Wags is such a strong advocate for these animals," says volunteer with Wags & Whiskers and animal advocate, Casey Voss. "One of the hardest things a rescuer will always say is, it is so hard to leave the shelter with 1 or 2, because you want to save them all..."

The rescues need to then we remind themselves of the quote:

"Saving just one dog won't change the world, but surely it will change the world for that one dog."



*Oakley, now Odin. Saved from animal control, fostered and loved by Wags. Now happily in his furrever home. *Love you**

As sad and gruesome the reality, I do not want to make light of all the work that has been done and strides taken both with animal control and the rescues. The fact that they are working together to give these animals a chance is big...it's huge. Something that was probably unfathomable 20 years ago and today people with huge hearts and persistence have made it possible. My hope is that by sharing the reality, the pain, the triumph and a glimpse of the emotional rollercoaster rescues ride every day that together we can make bigger strides, faster and cover more ground to change the world for one

more deserving soul. These two pictures are two of my personal fosters saved from local animal control now in their furrever homes. Currently, I have

three beautiful foster dogs in my home and I am blessed. Wags & Whiskers Animal Rescue of Minnesota saved three more. We must celebrate the wins. [See more wins by Wags & Whiskers!](#)



Teeko, another "win" and with his furrever family. Love you too buddy!

An Inside View of Animal Control:

What Really Happens to Your Dogs & Cats That End Up in the Pound



Meet Daphne: One of Wags & Whiskers "Saves" from Animal Control

Name: Daphne

Breed: Pittie

DOB: 2011

Sex: Female

Meet Daphne. She is a one year old pittie mix with beautiful translucent eyes. Daphne is about 50lbs. She is housebroken. She loves people and gets along well with other dogs. She loves to play fetch and run around the yard. She is learning basic commands and is very treat motivated. She will crawl up on your lap if you let her, but is also content lying on the floor. She is a happy girl and very affectionate. Please visit www.wagsmn.com for more information.



[Wags & Whiskers Animal Rescue](http://www.wagsmn.com) is a small 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to saving the lives and finding forever homes for stray, abandoned and surrendered animals in high kill shelters. Although they are small, Wags has made large gains in the rescue world. In 2011 alone they rescued and found homes for over 278 dogs/puppies and 53 cats/kittens. Dedicated and passionate volunteers, especially foster homes, are the life line of this rescue. Wags does not have a physical shelter; each animal is placed in the home of a volunteer foster until they are adopted. Because the animals are living with families in real life

situations, the volunteers know the animals very well and have an understanding of what kind of home is best for each animal - giving them a successful placement and adoption rate.



About Peace of Mind, Body & Soul Products and services to help maintain the health and wellness of animals and people through integrative methods including animal communication, canine and equine massage therapy, Reiki, acupressure, Raindrop Technique[®], Young Living therapeutic-grade essential oils, nutritional supplements & body care items. We teach you

how to perform these services on your own animal companions as well through classes, clinics and demonstrations. For more information contact: Jenny Gott, ECMT, (952) 484-4396, info@animal-intuition.com, www.animal-intuition.com, Young Living #925420.

Sponsorship: Peace of Mind, Body & Soul is offering 10% off first time appointments for any volunteer with Wags & Whiskers, or family that has adopted one of an animal companion from Wags & Whiskers. This is effective for all of 2012. Just mention this note & tell us if you are a volunteer with Wags or who you adopted when you set up your appointment. The animal does not need to be adopted within the 2012 calendar year.