

2015

BEST FRIENDS NATIONAL CONFERENCE

PLAYBOOK



**NO-KILL COMMUNITY:
WHAT WORKED, WHAT DIDN'T,
WHAT'S NEXT**

STATE OF UTAH



NKUT
A BEST FRIENDS INITIATIVE

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This playbook is one in a series meant to be used as guides as you explore how you can save more lives in your community. Getting to no-kill isn't a one-size-fits-all proposition. Each community is unique, with its own challenges and resources, so the playbooks highlight a variety of communities and detail the various ways that leaders in those communities progressed to no-kill or have their communities firmly on that path. Of course, there are some common denominators: Collaboration, commitment, hard work and data-driven approaches to problem-solving are some of the factors that have taken these communities to lifesaving levels once believed to be unreachable. We hope that you will find the information in the playbooks helpful and inspirational as your community works to **Save Them All**[®].

KEY PARTICIPANTS IN HELPING THE STATE OF UTAH TO BECOME NO-KILL:

- One major nonprofit: Best Friends Animal Society
- Coalition of more than 50 animal welfare partners (shelters, rescue groups and other animal welfare service providers) located throughout the state of Utah
- The NKUT steering committee, which includes representatives from Salt Lake County Animal Services, the Humane Society of Utah, Davis County Animal Care and Control, Friends of Animals Utah, Community Animal Welfare Society and Best Friends Animal Society

SOME KEYS TO UTAH'S SUCCESS:

- Forming a coalition to bring about no-kill through collaborative efforts
- Marketing adoptable animals through numerous avenues, including retail-style adoption outlets and pet super adoption events
- Conducting high-volume statewide mobile and fixed low-cost spay/neuter clinics
- Achieving cause marketing breakthroughs with local businesses
- Creating innovative adoption promotions and programs to get especially high-risk animals (e.g., kittens, pit-bull-terrier-like dogs) out of shelters and into homes
- Implementing trap/neuter/return programs to keep community cats out of shelters



INTRODUCTION

March 30, 2014, was a very special day for Utah's animals. It was the day that Best Friends Animal Society and its coalition partners officially launched No-Kill Utah (NKUT), an initiative aimed at ending the killing of dogs and cats in shelters throughout the entire state of Utah by the year 2019. Led by Best Friends, NKUT brings together passionate individuals, shelters and a coalition of animal welfare organizations that share a common mission to make Utah a no-kill state.

The plan is straightforward: provide spay/neuter services where they are needed most so fewer animals go into shelters and increase adoptions so that more animals are placed into new homes. The goal of NKUT is to achieve a save rate of at least 90 percent statewide, meaning that at least 90 percent of dogs and cats entering Utah shelters leave alive.

Great progress has been made so far. At the end of 2014, a total of 27 Utah communities had reached no-kill status by achieving a save rate of 90 percent or better. And the coalition won't stop until every shelter in the state is considered no-kill. In 2014, Utah's statewide save rate for dogs and cats combined was 78.2 percent, with a save rate for dogs of 91.6 percent. In the first few months (January to March) of 2015, the statewide save rate for dogs and cats increased to 84.4 percent.

NKUT is modeled after No-Kill Los Angeles (NKLA), which Best Friends launched back in 2012. Like NKLA, NKUT uses striking black and white photographs of homeless pets to accompany its no-kill messaging. "In Utah, NKUT is the final push to the finish line — the final push toward ending the killing for good," wrote Julie Castle, Best Friends' chief marketing and development officer, in a blog on the NKUT website.

City of Los Angeles	
2004 save rate:	55.6%
2014 save rate:	78.2%



CREATION OF A COALITION

Best Friends Animal Society began outreach work in Salt Lake City in the early 1990s. In 1994, Best Friends organized the first Utah's Week for the Animals, a statewide promotion of adoption, spay/neuter and advocacy that grew to include K-12 humane education curricula and the first Strut Your Mutt, which has since blossomed into a national grassroots fundraiser for rescue groups.

In 2000, Best Friends built on that foundation by launching No More Homeless Pets in Utah, a separate nonprofit sponsored by Maddie's Fund that was designed to lead a coalition of shelters, rescue groups, businesses and government leaders. Their work cut shelter killing almost in half by pioneering the coalition model, which is based on the principle that coalition partners can accomplish more by working together than on their own. In 1999, the year before the coalition was formed, the statewide save rate was just 43 percent. Largely as a result of coalition members' efforts, the save rate climbed to 78.2 percent by the end of 2014. Since the coalition began, more than 124,000 adoptions and nearly 318,000 spay/neuter surgeries have been supported or performed by Best Friends.

No More Homeless Pets in Utah introduced the following to Utah (and, in some cases, to the entire animal welfare movement): marketing adoptable animals through numerous avenues, including retail-style adoption outlets and pet super adoption events; conducting high-volume statewide mobile and fixed low-cost spay/neuter clinics; and brokering creative and innovative cause-marketing partnerships. Cause marketing efforts have included a partnership with Squatters Brewery (which donates 5 cents from the purchase of every bottle of Chasing Tail Ale to Best Friends) and development of a targeted spay/neuter program with Hooters restaurants, called Hooters for Neuters.

In 2011, No More Homeless Pets in Utah was re-absorbed by Best Friends Animal Society and renamed Best Friends Animal Society–Utah, with a special focus on helping two of the largest municipal shelters in the state, Salt Lake County Animal Services (SLCoAS) and West Valley City Animal Services (WVCAS).

Best Friends' collaboration with these two shelters has proven invaluable for saving homeless pets in Utah and led to the formation of the NKUT Coalition. Both Salt Lake County Animal Services and West Valley City Animal Services have been transformed into no-kill shelters, each with a save rate of more than 91 percent for all of 2014. In addition, Davis County Animal Care and Control, another of the state's largest shelters, recently made a formal commitment with Best Friends–Utah to become no-kill.

Today, the NKUT Coalition is continuing the lifesaving programs created over the years. Best Friends–Utah has a number of partnerships with shelters, providing them with the tools and resources they need to save lives, such as fundraising events, adoption promotions, stipends and more.

Best Friends programs help Utah shelters increase the number of pets adopted into homes and decrease the number entering shelters. Programs like Cat Crusaders and the Pit Crew help find homes for the most at-risk pets in shelters. Also, in 2013, Best Friends–Utah, in collaboration with Salt Lake County Animal Services, opened the Best Friends Kitten Nursery in Salt Lake City. In 2014, the nursery was moved to a larger location and the partnership was expanded to include four other area shelters. Best Friends–Utah’s shelter partners send kittens (those less than two months old and weighing less than two pounds) to the nursery, where they receive around-the-clock care, including bottle-feeding every two hours. This intensive care, which most shelters don’t have the resources to provide, is crucial for kittens’ survival.

All of these collaborative efforts are bringing a no-kill Utah well within reach. We’re not there yet, however. In 2014, more than 7,500 dogs and cats were killed in Utah shelters simply because they didn’t have safe places to call home. But by working together, Best Friends–Utah and its NKUT Coalition rescue groups and shelter partners are determined to reduce that number to zero.



ADOPTION PROMOTIONS AND PROGRAMS

Creative adoption promotions and programs have been initiated in Utah to make adopting more appealing and accessible to the public. In 2013, Best Friends opened the Best Friends Pet Adoption Center in Salt Lake City's Sugar House neighborhood. The adoption center is a lifesaving force in Salt Lake City, dedicated to giving homeless pets their best chance to find forever homes. And it's an inviting place for someone to find his or her new best friend. Each pet at the center comes from a local Utah shelter or the Best Friends Kitten Nursery, and each one is microchipped, vaccinated, spayed or neutered, and ready to go home with a new family after a short application and interview process. In 2014, 1,936 cats and dogs found their homes through the center.

Other adoption program innovations include Furburbia pet adoption centers in malls (which bring shelter pets to the public in a retail setting) and pet super adoptions (large scale adoption events in which hundreds of animals from dozens of groups and shelters are adopted over the course of a weekend).

To increase its adoption rate, Salt Lake County Animal Services expanded its hours, staying open later in the evening and on the weekends, to accommodate people who have a nine-to-five work schedule. In addition, the shelter is improving the process of matching pets with the right people. The behavior team evaluates the animals and their behavior, and then categorizes the animals accordingly. Volunteers are trained to work with dogs with different types of behavior challenges to give the dogs the skills they need to make them more adoptable. Staff members use the information provided by both the volunteers and the behavior team to recommend adoption matches to prospective adopters. These efforts by shelter staff and volunteers have helped keep the shelter's return numbers low. The shelter has a 100-percent satisfaction guarantee and, in the event that an animal is not a good match, the staff works with the adopter to find a more suitable match.

After an influx of cats in late 2011, SLCoAS began partnering with Best Friends-Utah to hold well-promoted, on-site adoption events one weekend every quarter. The events are an easy way to bring attention to animals who have been in the shelter long-term and are also less expensive than large-scale, off-site adoption events.

SLCoAS continues to get very positive response to reduced adoption fees, making it an effective tool for thinning the shelter population of certain animals. In addition, the Best Friends Pet Adoption Center has had a great deal of success running seasonal adoption promotions around holidays and events.



LOW-COST AND FREE SPAY/NEUTER PROGRAMS

To help reduce the number of unwanted litters, and therefore the number of animals entering shelters, Best Friends–Utah offers discounted or free spay/neuter services at its clinic in Orem, Utah. Plans are in the works to open a second spay/neuter clinic in 2015 near Ogden, Utah, says Arlyn Bradshaw, executive director for Best Friends–Utah and NKUT.

Best Friends–Utah’s targeted low-income assistance program provides spay/neuter for pets of Utah residents who are experiencing financial difficulty. Vouchers can be used at participating vet clinics throughout the state. There are a limited number of vouchers per month and priority is given to residents of Salt Lake County, Davis County, Utah County, Weber County and Washington County. To be considered for the program, a pet owner’s income level cannot exceed 200 percent of the federal poverty line. SLCoAS also provides low-cost sterilizations for pets of area residents.

Since the Utah coalition began in 2000, nearly 318,000 spay/neuter surgeries have been supported or performed by Best Friends.



COMMUNITY CATS AND TNR PROGRAMS

Throughout the U.S., community cats (also known as feral, stray or free-roaming cats) are at great risk of being killed if they enter shelters. In 2014, nearly 80 percent of the animals killed in Utah shelters were cats, which translates into approximately 10,500 cats killed in shelters throughout the state that year.

Since community cats often don't get out of shelters alive, Best Friends helps ensure that they do not end up there by organizing and operating humane trap/neuter/return (TNR) programs. Trap/neuter/return is a comprehensive management plan in which healthy community cats are spayed or neutered, vaccinated and then returned to their outdoor communities.

Evidence accumulated over the last 20 years shows that trap-and-kill programs, the traditional method for controlling community cat populations, are not only inhumane, they are ineffective. With trap and kill, any remaining cats continue to breed, and the population continues to grow.

TNR has proven to be an effective and humane method of reducing the number of community cats over time by stopping them from breeding. Not only does TNR save tax dollars by reducing the number of animals entering government-operated shelters, it also helps ensure that each cat has a happier, healthier life. In addition, a comprehensive TNR program helps minimize breeding-related nuisance behaviors, such as late-night howling and urine spraying.

Best Friends' community cat spay/neuter voucher program was created to keep community cats out of shelters, while gradually and humanely reducing their numbers. Through this program, Best Friends offers free spay and neuter vouchers, redeemable at participating veterinarians, to qualifying Utah residents.

In addition, to help keep community cats safely in their neighborhoods, Best Friends-Utah provides a variety of services to aid the public with issues related to community cats. These services include free consultation with Best Friends experts to resolve neighborhood conflicts about community cats, and information about humane deterrents to keep cats away from areas where they are unsafe or unwanted. Community cat caregivers are given trapping instructions, trap loans and winter shelters to keep community cats safe from the elements.

For several years, Best Friends-Utah has worked with two of the state's largest animal shelters — SLCoAS and WVCAS — on community cat issues. The two partnerships have helped save countless cats in Utah. In 2014, SLCoAS's save rate for cats was 88 percent, compared to 48 percent in 2009, the year that the partnership began. WVCAS's save rate for cats in 2014 rose to 88 percent, more than double the 36 percent save rate of 2011. TNR

programs are a critical part of these successful lifesaving partnerships. In 2014, NKUT expanded its TNR and shelter/neuter/return (SNR) programs into Davis County, which has had an immediate positive impact on that shelter's save rate. Davis County Animal Services' cat save rate improved from 20.7 percent in 2013 to 40.7 percent in 2014.

In 2012, Best Friends provided the staffing needed for SLCoAS to operate a jurisdiction-wide TNR program based on Utah's innovative Community Cat Act. Under this program, SLCoAS spays or neuters, vaccinates and ear-tips any community cat who enters the shelter, then releases the cats back to their neighborhoods. Because some community cats can't be returned to their original environment (e.g., because the building where they were living is being torn down), options for relocation spots were explored before the program was launched. To minimize the holding time for community cats at SLCoAS, all of them are spayed or neutered by an external high-volume clinic.



PIT CREW

Pit bull terriers make up a disproportionately high percentage of the pets killed in shelters. Best Friends–Utah works with the SLCoAS Pit Crew program to help more pit-bull-terrier-like dogs find homes and ensure that every dog, no matter his or her breed, is treated like an individual.

In 2008, the live release rate for pit bull terriers and pit bull terrier mixes at SLCoAS was just 60.9 percent, way below the 89 percent live release rate for other dogs at the shelter. SLCoAS knew something had to be done, so in 2009, SLCoAS started the Salt Lake County Pit Crew.

The program is working. In 2012, SLCoAS's live release rate for pit bull terriers and pit bull terrier mixes was 82.4 percent and for 2014, it was 90.6 percent. Here are some ways that the Pit Crew program helps save dogs:

- The Pit Crew holds numerous events throughout the year to promote adoption of pit bull terriers and provide dog care and training resources. The events educate the public about these dogs, dispelling myths and misperceptions; offer free vaccinations and microchips; and provide effective tools to help people socialize their dogs and keep them safe.
- The Pit Crew program provides low-cost spay/neuter resources for families with pit-bull-terrier-like dogs in the Salt Lake County area, which helps decrease the number of these types of dogs entering shelters in the future. SLCoAS provides free spay/neuter at its own clinic for pit-bull-terrier-like dogs.
- The hold times in shelters for pit bull terriers are longer and dogs in long-term confinement often exhibit deteriorating behavior. So, in 2013, SLCoAS focused on implementing ways to alleviate the boredom and stress of dogs in the shelter. Each day, the dogs spend time socializing in supervised play groups. This monitored interaction not only makes these shelter dogs' lives happier and less stressful, it also gives the shelter staff a lot of information about the dogs to pass on to potential adopters and helps the staff see which dogs need more specialized attention.
- A team of animal behavior specialists work with animals individually to give them skills that make them more attractive to potential adopters. The ability to respond to cues such as sit, shake and stay goes a long way toward making dogs more appealing when they are being introduced to potential new families. To help keep the dogs stimulated when they're alone in their kennels, the specialists give them enrichment tools such as Kongs and pop-sicles.
- SLCoAS established a Pit Crew Emergency Fund with Utah FACES (Friends for Animal Care and Effective Solutions). The fund is designated for pit bull terriers who enter the shelter with some type of injury.



BEST FRIENDS KITTEN NURSERY

To accomplish something as big as ending the killing of pets in shelters, you have to start small. That's why Best Friends-Utah is focusing on saving kittens, some of the most at-risk pets in shelters. Government-operated municipal shelters do not have the staff, facilities, volunteers and other resources required to provide around-the-clock care to orphaned kittens. With that in mind, the Best Friends Kitten Nursery opened in March 2014 in Salt Lake City. Every day, staff and volunteers care for up to 200 orphaned kittens (under two months of age and less than two pounds in weight), as well as nursing mothers and their kittens.

In 2013, about 14,000 cats and kittens were killed in Utah shelters, which constituted about 78 percent of all shelter deaths in the state. It was clear that for Utah to become no-kill, efforts needed to be sharply focused on saving more cats in shelters, especially newborn kittens. So, each kitten who comes to South Salt Lake Animal Services, West Valley City Animal Services, West Jordan Animal Services and Salt Lake County Animal Services now moves on to the Best Friends Kitten Nursery for care.

Operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the nursery has lots of space to help kittens grow, and a separate studio for nursing mothers and their kittens. The nursery's team of staff members, volunteers and foster homes provide around-the-clock care for every kitten. Some of their duties include preparing food to fill kitten bellies, bottle-feeding every two hours, doing lots of laundry and making sure each kitten is kept warm. No matter the task, the goal is to provide each kitten with all the TLC he or she needs to thrive and then be adopted.

The Best Friends Kitten Nursery, which now operates in a stand-alone facility, has partnerships with the four shelters in Salt Lake County mentioned above. In 2014, the nursery saved 1,193 kittens. With the beginning of the 2015 kitten season, the nursery has expanded its reach to all eight municipal shelters in Salt Lake County and plans to save more than 1,500 kittens this year.



BEST FRIENDS PET FOOD PANTRY

One critical step in helping to make Utah a no-kill state is providing residents with resources so they can avoid relinquishing their pets to shelters. Many people feel forced to give up their pets when they can no longer afford to feed them. So, in January 2014, a pet food pantry was opened at the Best Friends Pet Adoption Center in Salt Lake City.

The pet food pantry provides pet food to the pets of low-income residents and community cat caregivers. To receive pet food from the pantry, Utah residents must show proof of low-income (food stamp card, Medicaid card or proof of participation in a low-income assistance program). Low-income residents must also provide information about their pets (number of animals, size, etc.) and all pets must be spayed or neutered.

Qualifying Utah residents who have pets may receive pet food every two weeks. Requests for food can be made online or by phone, and residents are notified when their food is available for pickup. In 2014, almost 19,000 pounds of food was distributed to help 6,561 cats and 315 dogs.



WHAT'S NEXT FOR UTAH

To create a no-kill state, Utahns must work together to maintain the no-kill save rate (90 percent or more) for dogs and also increase the number of cats leaving shelters alive in order to achieve no-kill for cats. In addition to increasing the number of kittens saved through the Best Friends Kitten Nursery, the NKUT Coalition will work to expand TNR efforts in jurisdictions that allow the program. Change is happening rapidly: In 2014, nearly every city in Davis County approved TNR, and this effort will continue in Weber and Utah counties.

With the increased exposure that the NKUT initiative has brought to the no-kill movement in Utah, even more organizations are seeking to become members of the coalition. With the targeted work of these groups, the goal for 2015 is to transfer 6,600 animals out of shelters and into the coalition's various adoption programs.

In summary, the NKUT Coalition has a number of plans for 2015, including these:

- Increase the save rate for cats and dogs
- Maintain no-kill status for dogs
- Expand TNR and SNR programs into Utah and Weber counties
- Save 1,500 kittens via the Best Friends Kitten Nursery
- Increase the number of coalition members
- Open a second spay/neuter clinic
- Transfer 6,600 animals out of shelters and into NKUT Coalition adoption programs



Arlyn Bradshaw

PRESENTER

Arlyn Bradshaw serves as the executive director of Best Friends Animal Society–Utah, overseeing the lifesaving programs that are turning Utah into a no-kill state. Together with the NKUT (No-Kill Utah) initiative and its coalition of more than 50 animal welfare organizations, Best Friends–Utah runs its own pet adoption center, kitten nursery and two spay/neuter clinics.

In addition to Arlyn’s work with Best Friends, he is also an elected member of the Salt Lake County Council. Among his top priorities as an elected official is ensuring that Salt Lake County Animal Services — the largest animal services agency in the state — maintains its status as a no-kill shelter.

Arlyn graduated from the University of Utah with a bachelor’s degree in political science and a master’s degree in public administration. Prior to Best Friends, he worked at the University of Utah as the assistant dean of students. Originally from rural Idaho, Arlyn has been active in Utah politics and the University of Utah community for more than a decade. He lives in Salt Lake City with his partner, Neil Webster. They have three rescued pit bulls, Bella, Atticus and Sweet Pea, and a dachshund named Fritz.