

# Lifesaving Protocol

For Urgent Dogs

Lee Ann Shenefiel and Kristen Hassen-Auerbach

# Rico's story



# What Rico's Dad Carlos had to say...

- “It took training and loving him unconditionally for Rocko (Rico) to finally start to see that other dogs and humans pose no threat and just want to love on him. We now have him around children and other pets with no worries. He is extremely fascinated around smaller children and almost seems to just watch over them to protect. It's the cutest thing ever. There were speed bumps. But the outcome outweighs all of that. We have the most cuddle loving dog in the world. He wants nothing more than belly rubs and to destroy tennis balls lol. Thanks you your hard work and love these dogs are living their best lives.”

# Part I. The problem



# Medium and large dogs are at risk in shelters



- Housing restrictions and other barriers to ownership mean there are lots of big dogs
- Dogs with behavior or medical histories or declining in shelter are most at risk
- No standard protocol for making life and death decisions

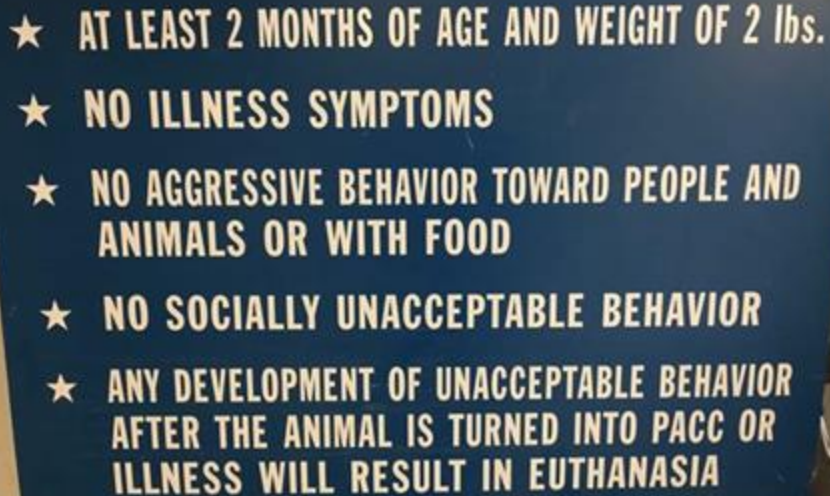
# Problems with how we make these decisions

- Subjective and depends on opinion of decision maker
- Do not give stakeholders notice or opportunity to intervene
- Do not consider alternatives to euthanasia
- Creates mistrust and negative feelings from community
- No checks on the system





# Starting points

- 
- ★ AT LEAST 2 MONTHS OF AGE AND WEIGHT OF 2 lbs.
  - ★ NO ILLNESS SYMPTOMS
  - ★ NO AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR TOWARD PEOPLE AND ANIMALS OR WITH FOOD
  - ★ NO SOCIALLY UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR
  - ★ ANY DEVELOPMENT OF UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR AFTER THE ANIMAL IS TURNED INTO PACC OR ILLNESS WILL RESULT IN EUTHANASIA

1. Behavior Assessment results should NOT be used to make life and death decisions
2. Lifesaving shelters euthanize 1 to 2% of total intake
3. Each dog is treated as an individual
4. We need to question our 'gatekeeper' role

# Why a life and death protocol matters



- Increase lifesaving
- Treat every dog as an individual
- Build trust with staff, volunteers and advocates
- Data tracking to identify gaps and risk factors
- Eliminates mistakes in decisions
- Promotes employee and volunteer emotional wellbeing

80% save rate

90% save rate



## The goal of the lifesaving protocol

1. Give every dog a fair chance at a live outcome
2. Manage behavior cases just as we do urgent medical medical cases
3. Be transparent, consistent and accountable to the public

# What is standing in your way?

- Resources
- Worry, fear, doubt, shame
- Lack of time
- Lack of behavioral expertise
- Bias
- Overcrowding



# A word about liability....



The image shows the top portion of the American Pets Alive! website. The header is white with the organization's logo on the left and navigation links in the center. On the right, there is a red 'DONATE' button and a search icon. Below the header is a hero section with a red background on the left containing white text, and a photograph of a dog on the right wearing a blue and white star-patterned bandana.

**american pets alive!** [ABOUT](#) [OUR WORK](#) [THE CONFERENCE](#) [MADDIE'S<sup>®</sup> LIFESAVING ACADEMY](#) [LATEST FROM AMPAI](#) [DONATE](#) 

**COULD WE GET SUED FOR THAT?  
AN INTRODUCTION TO MANAGING  
LIABILITY RISKS AT ANIMAL  
SHELTERS & RESCUES**

By Ryan Clinton

Known history vs. shelter decline

# Part II. The Process

## Dogs may be at risk for:

1. Bites to humans (depending on circumstances and severity)
2. Killing or injuring other animals
3. Legally declared dangerous or vicious

## Dog are not at risk for:

1. Failing or doing poorly on a temperament test/behavioral evaluation
2. Common behavior challenges
3. Fear, anxiety, shyness or stress-related behaviors

# Step 1: Mandatory minimum holding period





## 2. Assign a case manager



### 3. Call owner or finder

1. Not optional - mandatory call before kill policy
2. Allow owner or finder to be part of finding a solution other than death
3. Exceptions made in some cases

## 4. Attempt to find short term foster placement



## 5. Medically evaluate the dog



## 6. Issue a plea and give rescue time to respond

You can plea to the public, to rescue partners and to fosters and volunteers, depending on the circumstances of the situation! Give 72 hour minimum and one week if possible





## 7. Notify volunteers and staff (opt-in group)





## 8. Invite key people to discuss the case



# 9. Form is completed, reviewed and signed

Austin Animal Center Canine Euthanasia Approval Form for Dogs with Demonstrated Aggression (updated 2.1.2016)

Animal ID	A 719918	
Name	LINDS	
Age	2 years	
Intake Date	1/5/16	
Intake Type	STRAY	

Actions Taken	Date	Notes
Medical evaluation	5/4	
Staff team notified	5/4	
Plea to rescue partners	NO	NO RESCUE
Owner contacted	NO	NO OWNER
Plea to fosters and volunteers	NO	
Volunteers notified	5/4	YES
Incident notes confirmed	yes	incident occurred at APA/ACC
Plea to public	NO	
Behaviorist/trainer assessment	X	YES KET

**REASON FOR EUTHANASIA (Check all that apply) This dog:**

- bit a volunteer, staff member or member of the public while in the custody of the shelter while in (circle one) the shelter, a foster home, or a public outing.
- bit its owner, a family member or a member of the public while in the custody of its owner
- approached and bit a person while roaming stray
- displayed 'unpredictable aggression' towards a person or animal
- killed or injured another animal in the shelter
- killed or injured another animal in (circle one) its own home or a foster home
- killed or injured another animal while roaming stray

this animal has a legal designation that makes it (circle one) difficult or impossible to place

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**ATTACHED DOCUMENTATION**

- All notes on the animal from shelter software system (medical and behavioral)
- Notes detailing the incident(s) which led to the decision to euthanize the animal
- Notes detailing any rehabilitative efforts made (training, behavior modification plan, behavioral foster placement)
- Notes from staff advocate or volunteer or community advocates
- Notes regarding any groups or individuals who declined on animal with reason for decline
- Any e-mail communication about the animal

Form Completed By: [Signature]

Signature: Justin Rowland Date: 5/4

Administrator Review: [Signature]

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 5/5/16

Manager Review: [Signature]

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 5-5-16

Chief/Deputy Review: [Signature]

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 5/5

# Bonny and Cinnamon's stories



# Part III. Making Change in Your Org

**Pima Animal Care Center Behavioral Euthanasia Approval Form**

Animal ID		
Name		
Age		
Intake Date		
Intake Type		

Actions Taken	Date	Notes
Medical evaluation		
Plea to owner/finder		
Owner contacted		
Plea to fosters and volunteers		
Volunteers notified		
Incident notes confirmed		

**REASON FOR EUTHANASIA (Check all that apply) This dog:**

by a volunteer, staff member or member of the public while in the custody of the shelter while in (circle one) the shelter, a foster home, or a public outing.

## Evaluate your current process

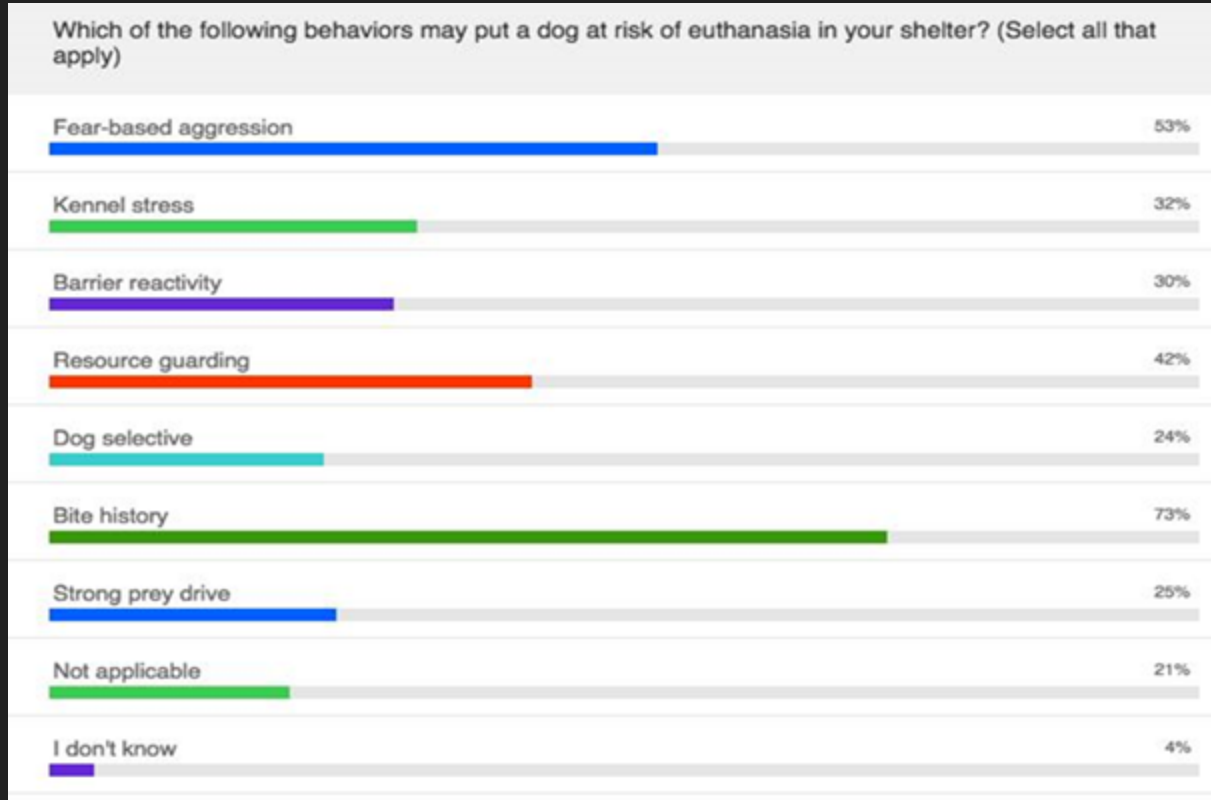
How many dogs were killed for 'behavior' in previous calendar year?

Percentage of total dogs killed for 'behavior' in previous calendar year?

Dog-by-dog reasons for 'euthanasia'

Shelter's policy on who makes decisions and how they are made

# What puts dogs at risk in your community?





# In most shelters, dogs are still dying for:

1. Common behavioral challenges
2. In kennel 'evaluation'
3. 'Failing' standardized temperament testing
4. Any skin break or 'bite' regardless of how minor



# Steps to implement the protocol

1. Differentiate between known history of causing harm and shelter decline
2. Create real-life assessment procedures - play groups, foster, day trips
3. Implement the lifesaving protocol checklist
4. Make decisions collaborative, involving many stakeholders
5. Director agrees to meet and sign off on all decisions personally
6. Support public advocacy
7. Commit to a case work approach