

## **Post-9/11 shelter killing hits 4.9 million a year**

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Entering 2004, ANIMAL PEOPLE hoped that 2003 would prove to have been the year when U.S. shelter killing of dogs and cats fell below four million for the first time since the first national estimates of the toll were developed circa 1960.

Instead, surging intakes of pit bull terriers, Rottweilers, and mixed breed dogs with pit bull or Rottweiler traits appear to have more than offset all the reductions achieved since 1997 in feral cat intake, accidental litters of puppies and kittens, and surrenders of unruly year-old purebred dogs of other types.

Thus the estimated U.S. shelter death toll soared by 17%, to 4.9 million.

The ANIMAL PEOPLE estimate is based on data from every shelter in cities, counties, or sometimes whole states containing more than a third of the U.S. human population, and is proportionately weighted to get regional balance. It includes data collected only in the three preceding years.

Thus the 2004 ANIMAL PEOPLE estimate is the first to consist predominantly of data reflecting the economic conditions following the high-tech stock collapse of 2000-2001 and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Replacing data from the fiscal years ending in 2000 and the first half of 2001 with data from fiscal years ending in 2003 and early 2004 brought a shock that required extensive further research to explain.

The surge in shelter killing did not actually occur all in just one year--only in data that was not yet available one year ago. Analyzing 2001 data in isolation from the years preceding and following indicates that the second half of that year was really when the toll jumped, and that 2002 and 2003 may have only brought a plateau.

Further, only intakes and killing of pit bulls, Rottweilers, and their mixes really did increase. In 1997, ANIMAL PEOPLE found, 57% of the animals killed in U.S. shelters were cats. As of 1993, when ANIMAL PEOPLE produced our only previous breed-specific survey of the U.S. shelter dog population, just over 30% were purpose-bred dogs other than pit bulls and Rottweilers.

Currently, only 43% of the animals killed in U.S. shelters are cats, and according to our findings from a June 30-July 2 survey of 3,023 dogs at 23 major open-admission shelters in representative cities around the country, only 17% were purpose-bred, exclusive of pit bulls and Rottweilers.

What changed is that the pit bull and Rottweiler component of the shelter dog population increased from under 5% to just over 26%. This included a more-than-four-fold increase in actual numbers of pit bulls, to 13%; an increase in Rottweilers from less than 1% to 3%; and an apparent five-fold increase in the numbers of pit and Rott mixes.

By 1993, according to data collected by ANIMAL PEOPLE editor Merritt Clifton since September 1982, pit bulls kept as pets, exclusive of dogs trained to fight, already accounted for more than half of all life-threatening dog attacks. Rottweilers accounted for 20%.

Over the past decade the number of life-threatening and fatal pit bull attacks increased 789%. The number of life-threatening and fatal Rottweiler attacks leaped 2000%.

Crippled by catastrophic payouts after 9/11, the U.S. insurance industry looked for ways to reduce risk, and recognized insuring pit bulls and Rottweilers as a major loser, at payout rates in maiming and death cases often exceeding half a million dollars apiece. At least nine major insurance groups will no longer cover a homeowner or renter who keeps a pit bull, a Rottweiler, or--in deference to humane society opposition to breed-specific regulation--any other dog of comparable size. That means not only pit bulls and Rottweilers but all big dogs are now much harder to adopt.

For several years the fast-dropping body counts of cats and dogs other than pit bulls, Rottweilers, and their mixes masked the effects of the pit/Rott population explosion.

ANIMAL PEOPLE estimated in 2002 that total U.S. shelter killing was just 4.2 million, down from 4.4 million in 2001, 4.5 million in both 1999 and 2000, and 4.9 million in 1997, the first time the toll fell below five million. But those drops were achieved almost entirely through the advent of trap/neuter/return to control feral cats, plus marked increases in adoptions of both cats and dogs. Twenty-five years ago, only one dog in 10 in a home came from a shelter. Today, two of 10 do, and in some regions the figure is nearly three in 10. Post 9/11, however, the funding available for neuter/return has declined, and the numbers of dogs arriving at shelters other than pit bulls and Rottweilers and their mixes are down as well.

Relatively few shelters are seeing increases in incoming cats, but fewer now are seeing the marked decreases that were achieved during the 1990s. Neither is adoption likely to save many more dogs than are already being saved.

With ways and means of decreasing shelter killing of cats and dogs other than pit bulls and Rottweilers having hit limits, at least temporarily, the rise in the pit/Rott toll finally became starkly obvious.

There were warnings as early as the first days of January 2004, when New York City Center for Animal Care & Control chief Ed Boks told news media that the CACC had managed to rehome only 460 of the 6,300 pit bulls it received in 2003, and that pit bulls now make up almost a third of all of the dogs that the CACC kills.

As yet, however, the humane community has not responded effectively to pit bull and Rottweiler proliferation. Since 1984 the American SPCA and the Humane Society of the U.S. have lined up with the American Kennel Club and other dog breeders' associations to oppose breed-specific legislation. During that time, pit bulls, Rottweilers, and their mixes have gone from being less than 1% of the total U.S. dog population to as much as 8%, almost perfectly parallel to the rates of increase in life-threatening and fatal attacks involving them.

Despite the post-9/11 surge in U.S. shelter killing, the overall trend remains positive. The peak toll appears to have been about 23.4 million circa 1970.

As of 1970, U.S. animal shelters collectively killed 115 dogs and cats per 1,000 U.S. human residents. By 2000 the killing rate had fallen as low as 14.8, and is now 17.4.

The momentum toward becoming a no-kill nation that has been lost since 9/11 can be regained, but only if the humane community squarely faces the problem.

Fairly evaluating the community data below requires taking into account the evident regional differences. Most of the lowest rates of shelter killing are clustered in the Northeast, with the highest in the South, except around Washington D.C. and in some of the more affluent parts of Florida.

The low Northeastern and D.C. area figures appear to result from high-density living, associated with low rates of pet-keeping; cold winters, the D.C. area excepted, which inhibit survival of late-born feral kittens and suppress estrus in dogs and cats, decreasing litter frequency; a relatively strong humane infrastructure to encourage neutering; and animal control agencies which have historically ignored free-roaming cats.

The high Southern figures conversely reflect suburban populations, high pet ownership, warm winters, and a general lack of access to low-cost neutering.

Animal population analysts Peter Marsh and Bob Christiansen have found in separate studies of data from California, Georgia, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and North Carolina that the poorest counties in each state kill dogs and cats at up to four times the rate of the richest.

No other nation has ever killed homeless dogs and cats at comparable rates, largely because no other nation has ever kept so many dogs and cats. The U.S. ratio of dogs to humans, for example, is about 1-to-4. The ratio in most European nations is closer to 1-to-8 (1-to-10 in Britain), and in India, including street dogs, the ratio is 1-to-10. Most other Asian nations have far fewer than one dog per 10 humans.

Data collected annually by Dogs Trust shows that shelter killing of dogs throughout the United Kingdom has fallen to 1.7 per 1,000 humans, according to 2003 data disclosed on July 20, 2004.

The highest U.K. rate of shelter killing of dogs is 2.4, in Northern Ireland. Comparable data pertaining to cats is not available, but U.K. shelters are believed to be killing fewer cats than dogs.

City	Animals Killed Per 100 People	Year	1000's People	Animals Killed
Ithaca, NY	1.8	2003	17	178
San Francisco	2.5	2002	771	1892
West Orange, NJ	3.4	2001	45	154
Onandaga County, NY	4.2	2003	311	1300
New York City	4.6	2001	8009	36500
San Diego	4.9	2002	2863	14019
Denver	5.8	2002	1961	11407
Maine	6.3	2001	1275	8000
SF Bay Area	7.1	2003	7039	50000
Richmond, VA	7.1	2002	265	1884
Oswego, NY	7.5	2003	18	135
Madison County, NY	7.8	2003	70	548
Colorado	8.3	2001	4301	119340
Silicon Valley	8.5	2003	1668	14097
Los Angeles	8.7	2003	9638	83780
Pittsburgh, PS	9.5	2001	1270	12000
Chicago	10.4	2002	2896	30000
Hartford Co., MD	11.2	2002	219	2448
Oregon	11.5	2001	3421	40505
Berks Co., PA	11.8	2002	85	4489
Phoenix, AZ	11.9	2003	3195	38048
Cincinnati	13.1	2002	835	10951
Sacramento	13.4	2002	1269	17000
St. Petersburg	13.7	2001	922	12600
Frederick CO, MD	13.7	2003	203	2784
Lodi, CA	13.9	2002	57	790
UTAH	13.9	2003	2233	31075
Ft. Laud./Miami	14.1	2001	5007	70514
Collier Co, FL	14.2	2001	266	3785
Las Vegas area	14.5	2003	1647	23758
Clark Co, WA	14.6	2003	361	5283
Wake Co, NC	15.2	2003	656	10000
Lincoln, NE	15.3	2001	263	4018
Butler Co, OH	15.8	2002	835	5329
Norfolk, VA	15.9	2003	1500	23869
Payette, ID	16.6	2002	60	1000
Kansas City	16.6	2002	1500	25000
Springfield, MO	16.9	2002	594	9689
U.S.Ave	17,4 (sample of 37%)			
Lewisville, TX	17.5	2001	78	1367
Columbia, SC	17.6	2001	321	5666
Grants Pass, OR	17.8	2003	78	1400
Minneapolis	17.9	2002	1115	20000
Philadelphia, PA	18.4	2002	1518	27952
San Bernadino	18.5	2002	1766	32656
Lee Co, FL	18.7	2002	463	8667
Virginia	18.8	2001	7.79	132978
St. Louis area	19.9	2001	1912	38000

City	Animals Killed Per 100 People	Year	1000's People	Animals Killed
Clermont Co, OH	20.3	2002	182	3,700
Twin Falls, ID	20.6	2001	35	721
LaPlace, LA	20.8	2003	50	1,042
Knoxville, TN	20.9	2001	382	8,000
Tucson/Pima	21.3	2001	844	18,000
Volusia, FL	21.6	2001	443	9,563
Atlanta region	22.4	2001	4152	94,256
South Bend, IN	22.6	2001	148	3,345
Sioux Falls, SD	22.6	2001	148	3,345
Pasco Co, FL	22.8	2001	345	7,880
Dallas/Ft Worth	23.0	2002	3439	79,207
Indianapolis	23.5	2003	857	20,100
Denton, TX	24.2	2001	81	1,956
Riverside, CA	24.3	2002	1636	39,687
Warren Co, OH	27.1	2002	169	4,572
Muskogee Coty, GA	27.5	2003	275	7,500
Modesto, CA	27.6	2003	469	12,943
Concord, NC	28.0	2002	136	3,808
Victorville, CA	28.6	2002	300	8,598
Volusia Co, FL	28.6	2003	455	13,000
El Paso, TX	29.4	2001	121	3,561
Flagstaff, AZ	30.7	2003	59	1,848
Chillicothe, MO	31.1	2001	15	453
Longview, WA	31.3	2002	80	2,500
Oklahoma City	31.6	2001	506	16,000
Tampa	32.4	2002	1000	32,431
North Carolina	32.4	2002	1186	265,289
San Antonio	33.0	2001	1393	46,000
Tuscaloosa, AL	33.0	2003	167	5,502
Chattanooga	36.1	2001	308	11,112
Charleston, SC	36.4	2001	549	20,000
Hutchinson, KS	37.1	2001	41	1,521
Merced, CA	37.9	2001	211	8,000
Kingman area, AZ	39.5	2003	162	6,404
Lincoln Co, KY	43.7	2003	24	1,045
Corpus Christi	46.3	2001	314	14,541
Columbia, MO	50.4	2002	80	4,033
Amarillo	50.9	2002	174	8,859
Hattiesburg, MS	56.2	2002	73	4,100
Hamilton, IN	60.5	2000	175	10,406
Gulfport, MS	73.9	2001	190	14,000
Valencia, NM	75.8	2001	66	5,000
Fresno, CA	80.0	2002	500	40,000
Thomas Co, GA	81.0	2001	43	3,476
Visalia, CA	81.1	2002	100	8,100
Navajo Nation	136.0	2003	46	6,952
Crude Totals	18.2			

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