The Louisiana SPCA, chartered in 1888, is the oldest animal welfare organization in Louisiana and is dedicated to promoting, protecting, and advancing the animals in the New Orleans Community. We currently impact over 70,000 animals per year through our life-saving adoption programs, low cost spay/neuter, and veterinary services. [1] Because we perform humane law services for Orleans Parish and are devoted to caring for every animal in need, we do not turn any animal away, even if we are at capacity. We currently average intakes between 4,000 and 5,000 animals of all species per year. [2]

Despite our dedication to improving the lives for all animals in New Orleans, we are not considered to be a no-kill facility with a benchmark of 90% of animals being placed in a forever home. [2, 3]. As you know, we are often faced with animosity from other rescues in the area who maintain the no-kill status simply because they can turn animals away when they are at capacity. They have spread this animosity to the community over the last few years through negative press like New Orleans Bull Dog Rescue’s lawsuit over releasing our detailed records, Villalobos’ airing of an episode regarding a Latrice, and the opening of a competing low cost spay/neuter facility on the East Bank.

The divisive rhetoric behind the no-kill label pins organizations who are working towards the same goal against each other. When it spills into the community, our work towards increasing the animals placed is jeopardized if we lose support. We must make the case to the public that we are all working for the same goal of improving lives of animals in our region.

In reality, we are not that far off from no-kill status. In 2019, approximately 84% of animals were placed through one of our programs like transport, adoption, return to owner, and wildlife release. Out of 4,689 animals taken into the shelter, 583 were euthanized. Other includes outcome types that are unrelated to euthanasia and live release such as DOA, died naturally and missing in addition to unknown types of Service Out and Clinic Out. These other outcomes make up only 4% of the total animals that arrived at the shelter. If we zoom in on the distribution of animals euthanized, we can see that 87% were classified as Unhealthy. The portion of animals euthanized who are deemed healthy are a small sliver of blue. The statuses in grey are Treatable-Manageable and Treatable-Rehabilitatable.

Intakes have been decreasing steadily over the last five years with the total intakes in 2019 being 34% less than the number of intakes in 2015. The Louisiana SPCA offers community programs aimed to control overpopulation such as their low/cost spay neuter and Trap-Neuter-Return Feral cat programs. When there are less homeless animals in the community, we can control our shelter population more effectively and reduce the likelihood that animals would need to be euthanized for space.

When looking at the outcomes from animals that arrived at the shelter in the last five years, we can see that live release methods take up a larger chunk of the total each year because their areas of the chart are getting wider. This could indicate that adoption is becoming a more popular option for families to obtain a pet, because it stays strong even though intakes are going down. We can also see that the number of animals euthanized are going down because the Euthanasia area in the chart getting narrower as time goes on.

Drilling down on the percent change since 2015, we can see that rate of animals who left the shelter through live release increased by 18% in 2019 over that five year period. Even more exciting is that the euthanasia rate of animals decreased by over 50% since 2015. We can clearly see that the Louisiana SPCA is not only working towards increasing adoptions but is aggressively working to reduce the number of animals euthanized.

In 2015, there were approximately 3 animals who found their forever homes through one of our programs for every 1 animal euthanized. In 2019, that number increased to almost 7. The increase in animals saved versus euthanized was 160%. This an interesting way to quantify the additional lives saved through programs and services that we have not used to communicate our success.

Here is the same statistic for Austin’s no-kill animal shelter and Dallas’ municipal shelter. The good news for everyone in the animal welfare community is that the number of animals saved each year is increasing. Looking at Austin Pets Alive, we can see that while the number of animals saved at the Louisiana SPCA are not as high, our rate of growth is higher. Dallas’ municipal shelter started in a worse position than we did in 2015 but have surpassed us in the last year.

Moving forward, our communication strategy should emphasize the work we have done to work towards a goal of zero animals euthanized. This messaging more closely emphasizes our progress in improving the lives of the animals in our community rather than the kill/no-kill label.

[1] *Our Mission*. (n.d.). Louisiana SPCA. Retrieved October 6, 2020, from <https://www.louisianaspca.org/about-us/our-mission/>

[2] *Shelter FAQs*. (n.d.). Louisiana SPCA. Retrieved October 6, 2020, from <https://www.louisianaspca.org/adopt/shelter-questions/>

[3] *What does no-kill mean?* (n.d.). Best Friends Animal Society. Retrieved September 27, 2020, from <https://bestfriends.org/no-kill-2025/what-does-no-kill-mean>