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OC WATCHDOG

Your tax dollars at work

Three out of four cats still don't leave shelter alive

February 16th, 2012, 12:00 am ·

· posted by **Teri Sforza**,

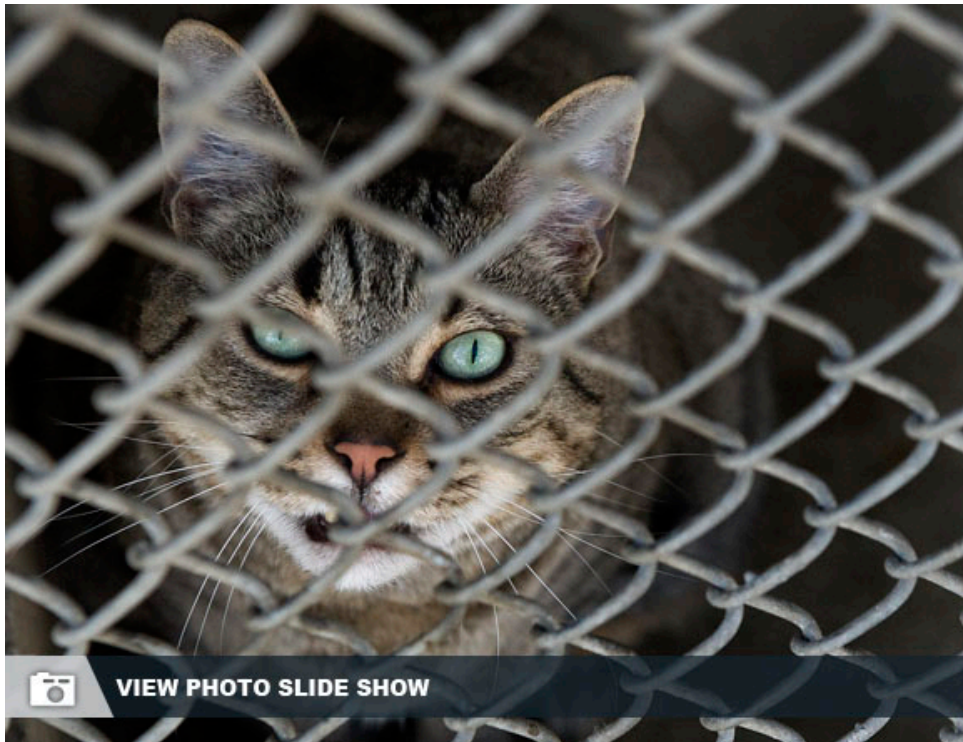
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VIEW PHOTO SLIDE SHOW

Fewer cats were impounded and euthanized by the **Orange County animal shelter** last year — but a profoundly sad **three** out of every **four** felines taken in did not leave the shelter alive.

That startling euthanasia rate — **74 percent** in 2011— has remained stubbornly steadfast for years.

“Impoundment and euthanasia of cats continues to be a top concern,” **OC Animal Care** director **Ryan Drabek** told us by email. “As with 2010, well over **2/3** of our total cat euthanasia is the result of feral cats and underage kittens.... We continue to increase the number of kittens that go to non-profit rescue groups and foster caretakers each year, but it's still not enough to save the thousands that come into our shelter.”

KITTY CARNAGE

Between 2010 and 2011, [according to shelter statistics](#):

THINGS TO DO



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Segerstrom Center for the Arts, C



AN EVENING AT THE ACADEMY AWARDS

Friday, Feb 24, 6:00 pm

San Juan Capistrano Library,
Juan Capistrano



FRANK CALIENDO (SPECIAL)

Friday, Feb 24, 8:00 pm

Irvine Improv, Irvine



AMERICA

Friday, Feb 24, 8:00 pm

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- ▶ The total number of cats impounded dropped from **13,622** to **12,947** (**5 percent**);
- ▶ The total euthanized dropped from **9,951** to **9,568** (**4 percent**);
- ▶ And the total number of cats adopted dropped from **2,573** to **2,214** (**14 percent**).

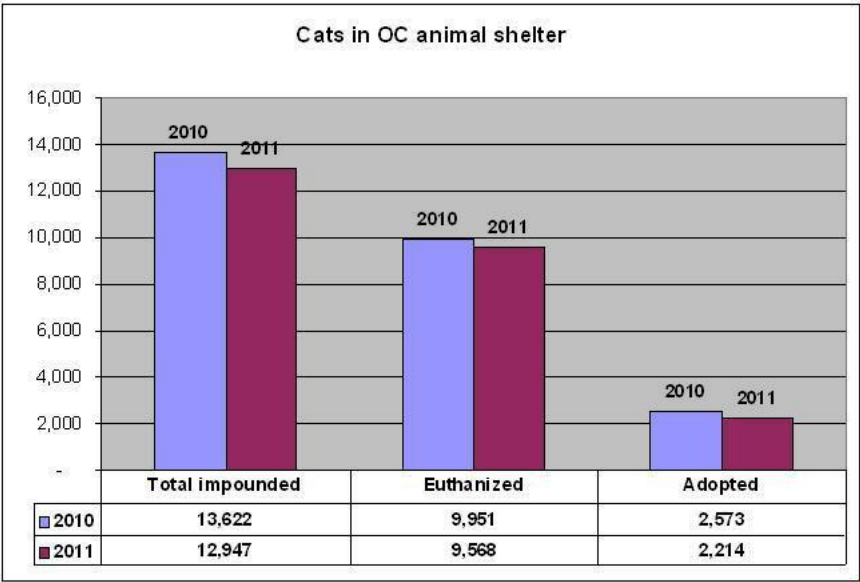


It's tough to be a kitty.

"Feral cats and neonatal kittens have consistently combined for approximately **7,000** cat euthanasia's a year at OC Animal Care since 2009," Drabek said. "Meaning, healthy and friendly domestic cats have a very good chance of adoption from our shelter, but without much-needed programs for feral and neonatal kittens, programs like TNR (trap-neuter-release), our cat euthanasia rate will remain high."

The shelter ran a small pilot trap-neuter-release program for feral cats back in 2009, but that funding is gone.

"We are still seeking additional funding for TNR and spay/neuter voucher programs, such as what the [OCSPCA \(Orange County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals\)](#) has been doing for years," Drabek said. "It is our hope that more funds will become available, as these programs are invaluable to decreasing feral cat populations, including the many unwanted and abandoned litters produced by these populations, in our communities."



Drabek said it's also important to note that the "returned to owner" rate for cats is "shockingly low."

"Only 173 cats/kittens total came to our shelter with any form of identification (a little over 1%)," he said. "This is compared to the 1,786 dogs (about 11%), which is also far too low. We can't stress enough the importance of identification (license, microchip, tag with name and phone #, etc.), but particularly with cats which are free-roaming and

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may not enter a shelter for several days, weeks, or months after being reported missing."

BIG PICTURE

We gave you the big picture last week, when we told you that:

- ▶ the total number of *all* animals impounded by the **Orange County animal shelter** – dogs, cats, bunnies, exotics, etc. — fell by **4.2 percent** between 2010 and 2011 (to **31,044**);
- ▶ and the number of animals euthanized fell by **3 percent** (to **14,634**), perhaps reflecting a pick-up in the economy.

Overall, about **half** of the creatures who wound up in the county shelter didn't get out alive.

Part of the solution to this carnage, some say, are strong spay/neuter laws.



[Proposed statewide spay/neuter laws have gotten this close to passing in Sacramento before faltering](#), largely on the argument that the state should not be telling people what to do; and the [county Board of Supervisors rejected a call from the grand jury to adopt a local mandatory spay/neuter bill](#) back in 2008 for similar reasons.

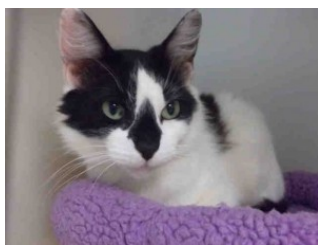
In 2009, [Laguna Woods broke from the pack and adopted an ordinance that called for dogs and cats six months and older to be spayed or neutered](#). Such laws typically take a couple of years to have an impact, statistically; we'll be turning our attention there in the near future.

ADOPTION

OC Animal Care hosted as many as **three** adoption events each month in 2011, including new events such as the **Animals For Armed Forces**, resulting in over **700** adoptions and **thousands** of visitors to the shelter, he said. "We continue to look for creative ways to promote the animals in our shelter and we are very grateful for those who have adopted animals from OC Animal Care."

The OC Shelter's emphasis on adoption programs continues, Drabek said.

As in all things, it seems, kitties are not faring as well here as their canine counterparts.



Here's the full statistical rundown on cats in **2010**:

- ▶ **73 percent** euthanized;
- ▶ **19 percent** adopted;
- ▶ **3 percent** fostered;
- ▶ **3 percent** euthanized at the request of their owners;
- ▶ **2 percent** returned to owner;
- ▶ and **1 percent** other (i.e., ran away, etc.).

And in **2011**:

- ▶ **74 percent** euthanized;
- ▶ **17 percent** adopted;
- ▶ **4 percent** fostered;
- ▶ **3 percent** owner-requested euthanasia;
- ▶ **2 percent** returned to owner;
- ▶ **1 percent** other.

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All of the kitties you see pictured here are available for adoption from OC Animal Care. [More kitties, and information, can be found here.](#)

The shelter hopes to work more closely with **Noble Friends**, the new nonprofit set up to help support it, in the coming year to help address the kitty problem.

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