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## Leveraging the U.S. No Kill Declaration

**O**n September 8, No Kill Solutions and Alley Cat Allies announced the Declaration of the No Kill Movement in the United States. Within one day, over 1,000 groups and individuals pledged their support. To date, over 5,000 groups and individuals have signed the document, and the numbers continue to climb.

*Signing the Declaration is only the first step. To leverage its value, individuals and groups must use it to challenge and ultimately change the status quo. To do so, animal lovers should use the programs and services it identifies as a benchmark to hold their local shelters accountable. And they should use it as a blueprint to create No Kill in their own hometowns.*

*“Stop the killing” is an important rallying cry, but it does not identify programmatic changes needed. The successes in San Francisco and Tompkins County (NY) prove that there is a blueprint for No Kill, and that the implementation of certain programs and services is crucial to lowering the death rate.*

*These key programs are identified in the Declaration and include:*

- High-volume, low- and no-cost spay/neuter services;
- A foster care network for underaged, traumatized, sick, injured, or other animals needing refuge before any sheltered animal is killed, unless the prognosis for rehabilitation of that individual animal is poor or grave;
- Comprehensive adoption programs that operate during weekend and evening hours and include offsite adoption venues;
- Medical and behavioral rehabilitation programs;
- Pet retention programs to solve medical, environmental, or behavioral problems and keep animals with their caring and responsible caregivers;
- Trap-Neuter-Return or Release (TNR) programs;
- Rescue group access to shelter animals;
- Volunteer programs to socialize animals, promote adoptions, and help in the operations of the shelter;
- Documentation before any animal is killed that all efforts to save the animal have been considered, including medical and behavioral rehabilitation, foster care, rescue groups, neuter and release, and adoption.

There are others:

- An end to the policy of accepting trapped feral cats to be destroyed as unadoptable, and implementation of TNR as the accepted method of feral cat control by educating the public about TNR and offering TNR program services;
- An end to the use of temperament testing that results in killing animals who are not truly vicious (e.g., shy/timid cats and frightened dogs) but who can be placed in homes, or are feral cats who can be returned or released;
- Abolishment of trapping, lending traps to the public to capture animals, and support of trapping by shelters, governments, and pest control companies for the purposes of removing animals to be killed;
- An end to owner-requested killing of animals unless the shelter has made an independent determination that the animal is irremediably suffering or cannot be rehabilitated;
- The repeal of unenforceable and counter-productive animal control ordinances such as cat licensing and leash laws, pet limit laws, bans on feeding stray animals, and bans on specific breeds.

The process may take time and energy, but the end results—animals whose lives will be spared—are worth the struggle. No Kill’s triumph of the status quo is inevitable. To quote the wise words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: “We are marching no longer by ones and twos but in legions of thousands, convinced now it cannot be denied by any human force.”



To read, print, or download the *Declaration* and to add your name or group to its growing list of signatories, go to

**[www.nokilldeclaration.org](http://www.nokilldeclaration.org)**

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