

Humane Societies
“Become a Member of the Humane Race”©

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PR Principles
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Introduction

Like people, animals can provide companionship, entertainment, and friendship. Yet there are many animals that are neglected and mistreated. The Humane Societies are a refuge for these battered and abandoned animals. The purpose of this study is to determine the people's attitude toward the Humane Societies in order to aid a future campaign to increase animal adoption, as well as donation through the society. It seems to me that not many people take advantage of the services provided through the Nebraska Humane Society. So just how utilized are the NHS's services?

This paper will provide a historical background of the Humane Societies, as well as a brief description of the Humane Society programs today. It will also supply a survey that was given to 20 people in the Omaha-metro area and surrounding communities, and well as bring forth the results in the form of graphs, then analyze the outcomes. In addition to finding out how many people surveyed used the humane society's services, the study also asked (a) whether the service was most used by people in the city, small towns, or country, (b) the kinds of services used, (c) whether respondents felt the services were valuable, (d) whether they would get a pet through the humane society, and (e) their perception of the numbers of animals brought into the NHS.

Background

History

One hundred and fifty years ago it would not have been unusual to see cats and dogs purposefully drowned. In fact, in Minneapolis, crowds of people would gather to

watch stray dogs collected from the streets lowered into the deadly waters of the Mississippi (Sateren, p. 14, 1997). One New York City man by the name of Henry Bergh found this cruelty to animals appalling and in 1866 established the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Many people followed his lead. Ranging in names from Maplewood Society for the Protection of Animals to Dumb Friends' League, all follow the same basic beliefs (Sateren, p. 16, 1997).

Not long after, in 1875, the Nebraska Humane Society was founded making it the fifth oldest Humane Society in the United States. Located in Omaha, NE, it was originally established for the protection of both abused animals and children. An early brochure claims, "Whenever a call of distress from a child or animal comes to the Nebraska Humane Society, it is answered at once" (Nebraska Humane Society, 28 May, 2003). Once the city of Omaha began to support child welfare, the society was used for solely animals.

Humane Societies Today

Capital Humane Society, located in Lincoln, NE, was established in 1902. Growing steadily, in 2001 over 7,000 cats and dogs were brought to the shelter. Around 2,000 of them were reclaimed by their owners, while 1,500 were adopted into new homes. Sadly, the remaining animals were either put to death or died of some other cause (Capital Humane Society, 28 May, 2003).

The largest animal protection agency today is the Humane Society of the United States. Founded in 1954, the organization includes over seven million members. The HSUS works closely with the Humane Society International (HSI) to promote animal

safety and care in countries throughout the world (Humane Society of the United States, 28 May, 2003).

Even with the countless number of humane societies throughout this country, millions of animals still suffer on the streets or in abusive homes. Cats are left behind when an apartment owner leaves a leased apartment and dogs are dumped in the country once their owners realize just how much work they can be. The humane societies do all that they can to help these creatures, but they need some assistance. For example, why buy a \$400 puppy that came from a “puppy mill” when there are hundreds of homeless dogs waiting to be adopted at the local humane society? Why dump a cat outside to fend for himself when there are beds nearby waiting for him? Why, when there are all these services provided nearby, do people not utilize them?

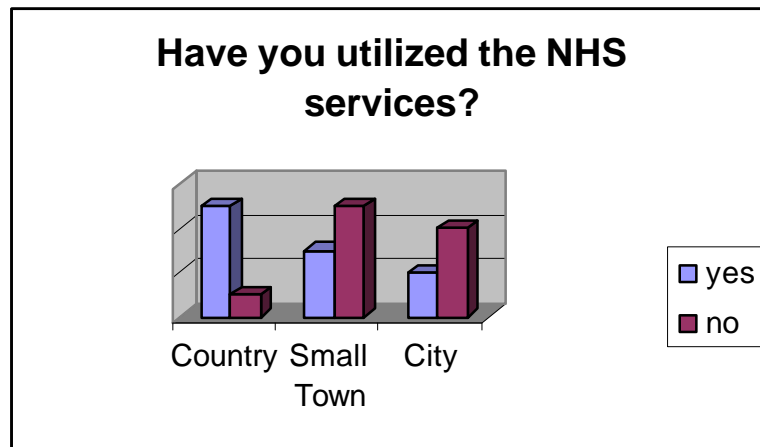
Methodology

To research this campaign, I chose to use the survey technique. This was the most practical technique regarding my time limitation. The research, I’m sure, is probably not accurate with that of more extensive studies being as I only surveyed people in the Omaha metro and surrounding areas. I tried to be as diverse as possible by including people who lived in rural and heavily populated city areas, different types of family situations, and ages ranging from 20 years old to over 50.

The purpose of my survey was to discover people’s views and attitudes toward the Nebraska Humane Society. Of the 20 people I surveyed, I wanted to find out how many people actually utilized the services provided and if they had, what their reactions were.

Findings

Of the people surveyed the majority of people that had used the services provided by the Nebraska Humane Society lived in country or rural areas as shown by the chart below. Most of these were incidents of dropping an animal off at the shelter, most likely a stray that had been dumped nearby.

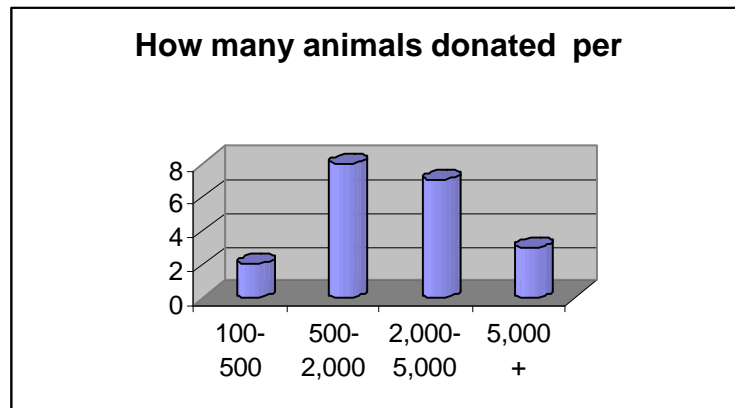


Of the few small town and city residents that had used NHS services, it was split about half and half between adoption and donation of an animal. Some adopted grown dogs and cats so they did not have to deal with the hassle of training them, while others dropped off pets that they were no longer able to have in their homes.

Over half of the people surveyed stated that they would consider adopting a pet from the Nebraska Humane Society. Some reasons were, “They are already housebroken” and “I feel sorry for the homeless kittens.” Some people would not adopt a pet from the shelter, however. Their reasoning included things such as, “I don’t know where it came from”, “It might be old and sick and die soon”, and “I don’t know how good it would be with kids.” Even though not everyone would adopt a pet from the

Nebraska Humane Society, 100% of the people surveyed thought that the NHS provided a valuable service.

As seen in the chart below, most people underestimated the number of animals brought into the Nebraska Humane Society yearly. The actual number is over 7,000 (Nebraska Humane Society, 28 May, 2003)



Discussion

The findings that I came up with pretty much coincided with my hypotheses. Although people think that the humane society is a good idea, not many people take advantage of it. The first step to take after seeing the results of this research would be to publicize the Nebraska Humane Society more. The more people are aware of it, the more likely they will be involved with it. Sponsorships and public events are a great place to get involved with the people of the community. Booths set up with information regarding the NHS and its programs would appeal to adults, while having a playful puppy or kitten

to pet would appeal to kids. I think that kids are a prime target for a Humane Society campaign because usually they are the ones begging Mom and Dad for a pet!

Because of the time limit, my research wasn't near as thorough as I would have liked it to be. I wish I could have surveyed more people to get more accurate results. I also wish I would have included the question "Have you ever visited the Nebraska Humane Society?" to my survey. It is such a basic question, yet I completely forgot to enter it. It would be interesting to find out if the attitudes of people change once they have visited the facility. I know in my case, I find it incredibly hard to walk out of there without a furry friend to take home with me. I wonder if a person's likelihood to adopt a pet from the society increases if they have actually visited the place. I'm willing to bet it does!

Summary

This short study has confirmed my beliefs that not many people are involved with the Nebraska Humane Society. In my future campaign I hope to show people that the humane society is more than just big kennel. It is a temporary home for thousands of animals just waiting for owners to waltz in and pick them up. The Nebraska Humane Society even has a gift shop! I think that if more people were exposed to the NHS, that many more people would become involved with it. Donations, adoptions, and volunteers...they are all needed.

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