

Phase 1

Development of a Shelter Population Index (SPI) for Cats and Dogs: A Multi-Institutional Feasibility Study

Development of a standardized tool that allows a uniform assessment of trends in shelter animal population statistics would allow a straightforward evaluation of the progress being made in animal sheltering regionally and nation-wide. Phase 1 focused on the methodology for the development and evaluation of a standardized Shelter Population Index (SPI), as a reasonable way to track cat and dog population trends in U.S. shelters. Eighteen animal shelters in four Combined Statistical Areas (CSAs) of human population in the U.S. participated and collected data monthly for a twelve-month period. Data points were adjusted to reflect the human population of the communities where the shelters were located by weighting proportionally the shelter data by the human population of the CSA. These data were used to formulate a hypothetical annual and quarterly SPI for tracking trends in the shelters. The study found that data collection for the SPI is feasible and useful. Stratification by cats versus dogs was critical and allowed for examination of the key differences in management strategies and community resources available for each species. Furthermore, a regional (multi-state) and national SPI will help balance the focus of evaluation between individual shelters and the shared responsibilities of the communities they serve. A paper that fully explains the method and the results has been submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. Specific results cannot be released until the paper is in print in order to honor the agreement with the publishers. However, when the

paper is published, copies will be available from the authors and a lay summary will be posted on the NCPPSP web site.

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