

# What does the term “No-Kill” actually mean...

## No-Kill

It's a common term in the animal welfare industry. It's also become an important label that many look for when determining if a rescue organization is worthy of their support. While it seems straightforward, there's more to this label than you might think.

## Where “No-Kill Began

The term, “no-kill” comes from a movement that began in the 1980s and 90s. At the time, a common way to obtain a dog or cat was to go to your local breeder. Shelter animals were often seen as a less desirable, broken alternative for those who couldn't afford a purebred animal.

## No-Kill Campaign

No-kill was formed as a response to the overwhelming numbers of healthy animals being euthanized in shelters across the United States. The no-kill campaign asked for a commitment from communities to take proper measures to save all healthy and treatable pets from unnecessary euthanasia. And it worked. A national database that began gathering shelter data in 2011, adoption numbers have more than quadrupled over the last decade and a half. As adoption became more popular with the public, shelters were able to gain more funding, which helped build larger facilities, hire more staff to care for and help rehabilitate animals, and purchase better medical equipment. And as funding grew, the number of healthy and treatable animals being euthanized decreased.

**But a label once meant to unite communities in saving animal lives now divides the animal welfare industry.**

To be considered no-kill, a shelter or rescue must have at least a 90% placement rate for the animals in their care. Since 2014, WMAS has met or exceeded that 90% standard--meaning we meet the qualifications to be considered no-kill... However, we've made a deliberate decision NOT to identify as a no-kill shelter. It's language we don't--and we won't--use, to describe ourselves or any other animal welfare group or agency.

## Why we don't use the term “No-Kill”

No-kill does not equal no euthanasia. To be considered no kill, organizations need to have a placement rate of 90% or higher.

### **So, what about the other 10% of the animals?**

Due to severe or untreatable illnesses or behavior issues, shelters and rescues sometimes face the difficult decision to euthanize an animal, but only when all other options have been exhausted. At WMAS, every animal receives a medical and behavioral evaluation when they arrive at our shelter. While many can be placed in our adoption program immediately, others need more time for medical treatment, foster care, or behavior rehabilitation. Some are even transferred if that's what is right for that animal. Our program and rescue partners ensure all animals have a chance to be placed in an environment where they can thrive.

**Animals who are candidates for adoption have No time limits in our shelter...they can stay as long as they need to find their forever happy new beginning.**

We pour our hearts into caring for each and every animal, but if an animal's physical or mental health continues to decline or it's deemed a danger to the community, humane euthanasia may be the best outcome for that animal.

Euthanasia, while difficult, can be an act of compassion for animals who are suffering.