

Planetary Wellbeing

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Ensure Animal Wellness

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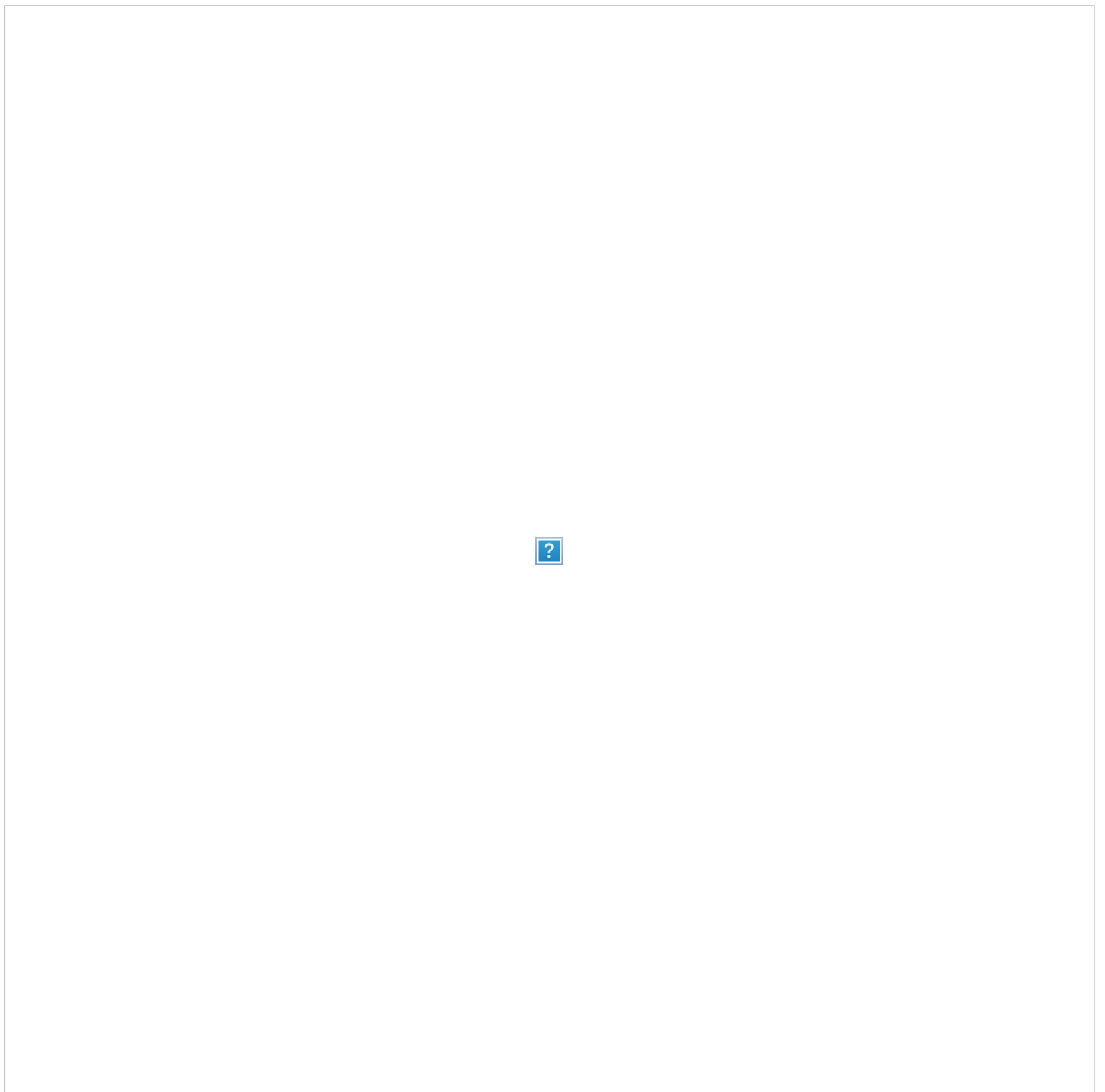
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Volunteer with an Animal Shelter or Humane Society

Overpopulation of animals like cats and dogs is a tragic problem that plagues our country. Stray animals wander the streets, suffering illness, starvation, and cruelty at the hands of unkind individuals, all without the loving care of a human protector. Those who are lucky enough to make it into an animal shelter have a higher likelihood of being adopted, but because of overcrowding in these facilities, many are euthanized every year.

This sad reality does not have to continue since there are many things individuals and communities can do to support these innocent creatures and foster animal protection. This issue is close to our hearts. When we heard of the **Beagle Freedom Project** – a group that is working to (legally) free beagles from testing labs and finding loving forever homes for them – our owner, Hart, responded passionately: “We have to help them!”

We want to help these innocent animals and encourage you to do so as well by supporting the Beagle Freedom Project and others like it by becoming a volunteer with an animal shelter or humane society. Pitching in and helping out at these organizations is a great way to demonstrate your compassion for animals, helps to reduce shelter operating costs so that they can help more cats, dogs, and rabbits, and will give you incredible insights into the plight of animals in your own community. We know the love you receive in return from these creatures will more than reward you for your time.



Quick Guide: Tasks Faced by Shelters and Humane Societies to Save Strays

- **Number of stray dogs in America:** 70 million dogs in the US are homeless, each one longing for a human to go for walks with. Out of the ones that enter animal shelters, 25% are purebred.^[i]
- **Number of feral cats in America:** The estimated total number of cats in the US is up to 120 million.^[ii] Out of this figure, an approximated 70 million cats are strays, and each one needs someone to provide daily care and kindness.^[iii]
- **Animals entering US animal shelters daily:** Everyday there are between 14,000 and 20,000 companion animals taken in to the estimated 3,500 animal shelters in the US.^{[iv] [v]} Animals given up by their human caregivers comprise 30% of the shelter population while the rest were dropped off by animal control.^[vi]
- **Top reasons for relinquishment of pets:** Reasons why domestic pets are sent to animal shelters by their human caregivers include the cost of caring for them, issues with landlords, having inadequate facilities in the home, and allergies.^[vii]
- **Other common animals found in shelters:** More than just cats and dogs, animal shelters are also home to hamsters, snakes, rabbits, birds, and even farm animals.^[viii]
- **Number of animals euthanized every day:** At least 10,000 animals are euthanized daily in the US due to varying reasons,

the biggest of which is the unavailability of good homes for them. Most dog and cat deaths in the US are because of shelter euthanasia.^[ix]

Take Action! Help Animal Shelters by Volunteering!

1. **Become a regular volunteer:** Animal shelters and non-government organizations fighting for animal rights can always use helping hands. Programs like the [ASPCA Ambassadors](#) and [Humane Society Volunteers](#) have numerous opportunities for you to work for the cause of animal protection and welfare right in your own community. You can walk dogs, cuddle with cats, clean out animal sleeping quarters, support office staff, and much more. Check out the ASPCA's [Top Ten Ways to Help Your Local Shelter](#) for even more ideas.
2. **Emergency animal rescue volunteering:** Many animal welfare organizations, including The Humane Society and the ASPCA as well as others organize volunteers to help after natural disasters, like hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, and snow storms. If you've got a spare couple of days or a week, sign up to take the volunteer trip of a lifetime!
3. **Foster pets until they find forever homes:** Help ease the burden on animal shelters by offering your home as a foster residence. Most of these programs involve a short-term care agreement with the aim of placing the animal in a permanent home once one is found.
4. **Be an activist volunteer:** The laws and regulations regarding animals in your community have a big impact on how animal shelters function and whether they can do their jobs well. Advocate for these organizations through the [ASPCA's Advocacy Center](#) or by using the Humane Society's [Find Your Elected Officials](#) to locate federal and state political representatives and tell them you want better laws and programs to protect animals.
5. **Be a spay and neuter ambassador:** Learn about the many [benefits of spaying or neutering](#) companion animals and tell your friends, family, coworkers, and others in your community to get the surgery done to help reduce the pet population. There's no time like the present. If cost is a factor, encourage them to go to [SpayUSA](#) or the [ASPCA](#) to find low-cost or free programs.
6. **Advocate for people to properly identify their pets:** If more people placed identification on their pets, a greater number would stand a chance to be reunited with their owners. Send people to organizations like [PetLink](#) – a microchipping company that helps reunite pets and owners every day.
7. **Volunteer by opening your home to animals:** When you support pet stores, cat and dog breeders, and puppy mills that make money off of the selling of animals, you contribute to the problem of pet overpopulation and make the work of animal shelters that much harder. If we as ethical consumers use our purchasing power by adopting from animals shelters rather than buying from puppy mills and pet stores, in a way, we're volunteering our support by easing the burden on the local humane society or shelter. It's one of the most important things you can do to reduce the cruelty experienced by these creatures.

Dig Deeper: Animal Cruelty and Opportunities with Animal Care Services

- Get inspired to help out at animal shelters by finding out more about [animal cruelty](#) and how to fight it via the ASPCA.
- Stay tuned to all of the news regarding the welfare of animals in your community via [The Human Society's News](#) and the [ASPCA News](#).

[i] (Animal Overpopulation)

[ii] Hartwell, S. (n.d.). *The American feral cat problem*. Retrieved from <http://www.feralcat.com/sarah3.html>

[iii] *8 fast facts: pet overpopulation in the US*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://animal.discovery.com/tv/underdog-to-wonderdog/pet-overpopulation/>

[iv] *Pet statistics*. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.asPCA.org/about-us/faq/pet-statistics.aspx&ei=Fx4-UP2pEMrIrAf9joGQBQ&usg=AFQjCNFcQ6A_uiobzS5LJ_3Oue5BXHR7DA

[v] *HSUS pet overpopulation estimates*. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/pet_overpopulation/facts/overpopulation_estimates.html

[vi] (Animal Overpopulation)

[vii] *The top ten reasons for pet relinquishment to shelters in the United States*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.petpopulation.org/topten.html>

[viii] *The truth about shelters*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.foundanimals.org/pet-adoption/we-love-shelters>

[ix] *Pet euthanasia*. (n.d.). Retrieved from *The top ten reasons for pet relinquishment to shelters in the US*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.petpopulation.org/topten.html>

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