

Human Animal Support Services (HASS): Deceitful and Dangerous



Human Animal Support Services (HASS) is a gimmick that promotes policies aimed at increasing animal shelters' so-called "live-release" statistics by **keeping animals out of shelters**. It's part of a push by hobbyists who have increasingly taken over the animal control and sheltering field in recent years with a singular focus: achieving **live-release statistics that look appealing**. But this tunnel-vision focus comes at the expense of everything else, including animals' well-being and public health and safety.

HASS and similar "life at any cost" schemes mislead the public with vague and deceptive language. In practice, their policies (which include turning away animals from partially and fully taxpayer-funded sheltering facilities and telling residents to leave homeless and stray cats and dogs to fend for themselves on the streets) are **disastrous**. Here are just a few alarming examples of the suffering inflicted on animals when such policies are enforced:

- **Florida:** In Miami-Dade County, where the public animal shelter has implemented HASS-type policies, a [news report revealed](#) that county animal services had been turning away animals and that staff members had even allegedly told residents to abandon homeless animals on the street. One resident said that she had witnessed "a line of people with dogs" being turned away from the facility and explained that she'd left in tears after being told to release a homeless dog she'd rescued back onto the street to fend for herself.
- **New York:** In Rochester, where the public shelter is a HASS "pilot shelter," a volunteer and foster caregiver at the facility shared publicly: "They have adopted the HASS way of doing things. ... We are very upset about this change. It leaves lost and dumped cats to fend for themselves Cats are freezing, suffering and people are doing very bad things to get rid of the unwanted cats around their properties. We are seeing it every day."
- **South Carolina:** In Greenville County, where the public animal shelter is a HASS "pilot shelter," 18 people were exposed to [rabies](#) by a roaming, infected pit bull.
- **Wisconsin:** In Green Bay, where animal shelters have HASS-type policies, a houseless woman undergoing chemotherapy said she had been turned away from no fewer than seven **animal shelters** before abandoning her diabetic dog by tying her to a fire hydrant with a note and a backpack containing supplies.

Government Liability

Discouraging or hindering residents from taking animals to the community's shelter endangers the public—and local governments may be liable for injuries and deaths that result. HASS program recommendations include keeping animals out of shelters by requiring members of the public

Stray dogs [and] cats ... should be removed from the community, and mechanisms should be put in place to facilitate voluntary surrender of animals to prevent abandonment.

—National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians

to care for stray animals they find, some of whom could attack or even kill people or their animal companions. HASS recommendations even charge the public with searching for stray animals' owners themselves, some of whom could react [violently](#). **It's a dangerous, irresponsible, and inhumane dereliction of duty.**



Taxpayer Betrayal

Members of the public in communities where HASS and similar policies have been implemented are rightfully alarmed and frustrated that their taxes pay for services that are ultimately withheld. After the public animal shelter in El Paso, Texas, became a HASS "pilot shelter," community members [protested outside city hall](#) "demanding the city's Animal Services Department do more when it comes to picking up stray pets." They told a news outlet that "when a stray animal is found in the city, employees tell them to take care of the stray themselves or release them back into the community."

Animal Suffering

Animals rejected by shelters don't vanish or magically find refuge elsewhere. They're often dumped by the side of the road, where they're at risk of being run over and dying alone and in pain, killed in horrific ways (such as the case in which a Phoenix man [beat his two cats](#) to death with a sledgehammer after, he said, "he tried to get someone to adopt the cats but no places would take them"), [thrown in the trash](#), or abandoned to starve to death when their owners move or are evicted or hospitalized.

Additionally, if a shelter turns away even one unsterilized animal, it can result in the births of [thousands](#) more who **will also end up homeless.**

Real Solutions

Communities have successfully reduced the *need* for animals to be sheltered in the first place by passing and enforcing commonsense ordinances and policies, including the following:

- Requiring public shelters to admit **all animals who need shelter**, including those who may need to be euthanized
- Requiring owners to spay or neuter their dogs and cats or purchase a costly breeding permit to help offset the costs of animal control and sheltering
- Requiring pet stores to operate as adoption centers instead of selling puppies and kittens, most of whom come from cruel mass-breeding facilities
- Requiring that owners adequately and humanely care for and commit to animals they've taken in by prohibiting unattended tethering and establishing standards of care

PETA can provide sample ordinances and responsible shelter policies upon request.



PETA