

Road Map to No-Kill Nationwide by 2025



**SAVE
THEM
ALL**

We are building a better future through kindness to animals

Olivier was three months old when she ended up at a shelter in Utah with a fractured leg. The little orange kitten not only needed medical care, she was unsocialized with people and terrified of the shelter's unfamiliar sights and smells. Soon, however, she was on her way to Best Friends in Utah.

An exam by the Best Friends medical team revealed that Olivier's leg would require surgery to get her back up and running. While she was healing, she would be kept comfortable in a Best Friends foster home. Olivier was fostered by volunteer Katherine Lapp, who had grown up with a shy kitten. Katherine had learned some socializing skills working with her family's cat and she was looking forward to testing out those skills with Olivier.

When she first arrived at Katherine's home, Olivier slinked against the walls and hid behind the dresser. Toys and treats failed to interest her, so Katherine brought out her guitar and played and sang to her until she dozed off. When the music stopped, Olivier hissed at her, but Katherine was determined to help her foster pet come around. She spent a lot of time in Olivier's space, holding out her hand and simply sitting nearby to get her used to having a human around.

It took time, but the effort paid off. Olivier soon started to come out of her shell, and she discovered the joys of sleeping next to a person. All she needed was time to heal and a patient person to help her feel safe.

Keeping dogs and cats out of shelters, providing medical care for those who are injured or sick, engaging volunteers, and making whole communities part of the solution for homeless pets are just a few examples of how Best Friends — and compassionate people like you — are saving lives and leading the nation to no-kill.

This is the future we're building, together, all across the country. You can help make that happen. Join us.

Together, we can Save Them All

Like you, we know pets don't belong in shelters. They belong in homes. Our mission is simple but powerful: Bring about a time when there are no more homeless pets.

For more than 35 years, Best Friends has worked to save pets across the country through innovative programs and partnerships. This work has helped reduce the number of cats and dogs killed in America's shelters from an estimated 17 million in 1984 to approximately 625,000 today.

As our movement grew from its humble beginnings, so did evidence that our programs save lives and offer enormous potential. In 2016, we declared a **bold goal that the United States will be no-kill in every shelter in every community by the end of 2025**. A lot of people thought we were crazy. We thought the opportunity – and the urgency – demanded nothing less.

And it is working. Together, Best Friends and our thousands of shelter and rescue partners have been saving lives and creating more no-kill animal shelters at an unprecedented rate. Since 2016, there has been a 58% reduction in the number of animals being killed: 2.3 million more cats and dogs saved.

This is groundbreaking progress. But so many more animals need us. Around 1,700 cats and dogs are still killed in shelters every day, simply because they don't have safe places to call home. Like you, we believe each of these wet noses and wagging tails has the right to live a long and happy life. So we need to do more, faster, together.

Our solutions are working

In 2016, Best Friends declared that we would lead the nation to no-kill for dogs and cats by 2025. We've made incredible progress, together. With you by our side, we are confident that we will achieve no-kill nationwide by 2025.



Sure, we'll need to move a few mountains to get there. (We've already moved a few, with your help.) But we have a North Star, which is kindness to the animals and kindness to one another.

And we have a detailed national strategy with proven, lifesaving programs as our road map. It's an ambitious plan, and an undertaking of this magnitude needs to be grounded in vision and driven by facts. That's why Best Friends has been rigorously collecting and analyzing data from shelters across the nation, to create a one-of-a-kind view of companion animal welfare and shelter performance.

Here's what we know

Cats are most at-risk in America's shelters:
More than 2 cats are killed
for every dog killed.

About half of the shelter killing is happening in
only 5 states:
California, Texas,
North Carolina, Florida
and Louisiana.

Out of 4,850 animal shelters,
100 can save half
of ALL cats
and dogs killed.

This helps Best Friends and our partners understand exactly where our country's lifesaving needs are the greatest and which animals are most at risk. This tells us where to target resources for biggest impact.

Drawing on this data and decades of experience, we recently updated the Road Map to No-Kill 2025. It is our strategic plan to achieve the greatest lifesaving impact, while holding ourselves accountable to clear metrics, benchmarks, and fiscal responsibility. The Road Map is organized around three strategic priorities:

Saving Lives

Supporting
Shelters

Mobilizing
the Public

Taken together, these strategies save lives today and chart our course to No-Kill 2025. We know how to make this happen. And we need partners like you by our side.

“No-kill” explained

No-kill means saving every dog and cat in a shelter who can be saved. It means healing the animals who can be healed, treating behaviors that can be treated and prioritizing safety and a high quality of life for both pets and people in our communities. When shelters and communities follow no-kill principles, every animal is recognized as an individual.

A 90% save rate for the animals entering a shelter is the common-sense benchmark for measuring lifesaving progress. Typically, the number of pets who are suffering from irreparable medical or behavioral issues that compromise their quality of life and prevent them from being rehomed is not more than 10% of all pets entering shelters. This is the benchmark Best Friends uses to measure progress in our campaign to Save Them All.

1 / Saving Lives

At Best Friends, we believe that every animal is deserving of a full and happy life, and that big change requires creativity and a willingness to challenge conventional practices. We've pioneered new approaches to saving lives and are continuing to develop and test lifesaving tactics and technologies that will better inform the work to end the killing of pets in shelters.

We're saving lives through the Best Friends Animal Sanctuary and a suite of programs and initiatives with a broad reach that shares what we've learned with our partners and gives them the tools they need to end the killing. Across the country we have teams that work both remotely and in-person to deliver services that save more lives in their communities and states. And this work is about more than saving lives—it is about **ENDING** the killing of pets in shelters. We are driving systemic change in animal welfare, thanks to the visionary commitment of partners like you.

Best Friends Animal Sanctuary

As the purest expression of our commitment to Save Them All, Best Friends Animal Sanctuary is the nation's largest no-kill sanctuary for companion animals. Nestled in the red-rock canyons of southern Utah, the nearly 4,200-acre Sanctuary is a home-between-homes for around 1,600 animals, many with special medical or behavioral needs.

The Sanctuary is where our movement began, and it continues to serve as the proving grounds for innovative lifesaving techniques that are helping to redefine the care and compassion we provide to homeless pets.

Animals live here, are loved here, and are welcome to stay until they are adopted. Best Friends employs a holistic approach to each animal's lifesaving, which is tailored to meet his or her unique needs. There is an extensive "menu" of care options at Best Friends, and each animal receives the combination of options that is likely to benefit him or her the most. Of course, there's lots of love and attention baked in at every step of the way, and the ultimate goal is preparing animals to be placed into loving homes whenever possible.

Lifesaving programs and initiatives

Community-supported sheltering means thinking beyond the walls of the shelter into community-based solutions involving a range of partners committed to the same goal: saving lives. Our strategy is also evolving to a region-wide view, with our lifesaving hubs expanding their impact beyond the cities they are based in.

Our lifesaving hubs in areas like Los Angeles, New York, Atlanta, Salt Lake City, Northwest Arkansas, and Houston extend our reach. In these communities and beyond, Best Friends' lifesaving teams work collaboratively with city shelters, individuals and local animal welfare organizations to save lives. We don't just want better animal shelters; we want to reduce the need for animal shelters.

For example, our centers run foster and adoption programs in collaboration with animal shelters, facilitate lifesaving pet transports, help nearby rescue groups raise funds, run community cat programs, provide access to spay/neuter services, and work collaboratively with whole communities to save more lives.

Thanks to you, Best Friends is leading the way when it comes to saving lives. And we are just scratching the surface on even greater innovations that can take the nation all the way to no-kill. Your support for saving lives fuels our progress, one animal saved at a time.

Beyond a building

Community-supported sheltering is the future. It's not about a building. It's a model in which animal shelters, supporting organizations and community members work together to save cats and dogs.

While brick-and-mortar animal shelters will always play a critical role in the communities they serve, they shouldn't exist just to house

homeless pets long-term. Instead, shelters must play a new role as resource centers — providing support for both ends of the leash and helping to keep more pets in the loving homes they already have.

This is our better and brighter future. And that future and our work together is bigger than the four walls and roof of any one shelter.

Saving lives at the Sanctuary

A tough husky mix is proving just how resilient our canine companions can be. Togo was a stray dog in Arizona, suffering from a gunshot wound and a fractured jaw. Tuba City Humane Society, a Best Friends Network partner organization, stepped in to help him.

A veterinarian was able to wire Togo's jaw into place, but he would need a couple months to recover and undergo additional surgeries to get everything back in working order. To give him the time and care he needed, Togo was brought to Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, where the veterinary staff set up a quiet room at the clinic and made sure he had plenty of soft, easy-to-eat food, plus warm blankets to snuggle in.

Shy around people, Togo perked up when other dogs visited the clinic. When he recovered enough for the jaw wiring to be removed, it was time to move out of the clinic. There was no question about it: Togo would need a roommate. But he didn't get just one – he got three roommates. Taquito, Haku and Badger have helped Togo relax and build confidence around people.

Today, Togo is a playful, happy dog who just wants to have fun. And soon, he'll be looking for a home of his own. Like you, we believe that animals like Togo deserve a second chance. You can make that happen.

2 / Supporting Shelters

When the first shelter walls were built 150 years ago, it was common practice to round up stray dogs and kill them in callous ways. Despite early animal advocates calling for the humane treatment of animals, the killing not only continued for generations, it solidified itself as an acceptable method of population control.

The no-kill movement dawned in the 1980s. Refusing to accept the long-held idea that killing animals in shelters was a necessary evil, the founders of Best Friends, along with progressive leaders in communities like San Francisco, fought to build a new reality with new expectations that prioritized the lives of pets in shelters. We still carry this torch today.

And now, nearly half of the animal shelters in the United States are no-kill. But it didn't happen overnight. For shelters and their communities to become no-kill, it takes a shared vision, resolve, expertise, resources, and above all, collaboration and alignment around one goal to Save Them All.

But despite their hard work, many shelters across the country are overcrowded and stretched thin trying to help homeless pets in their area. If we are to achieve no-kill nationwide, we must be laser-focused with replicable programs and strategies that will save these animals.

We provide targeted support

Best Friends' national data collection and analysis tells us which animal shelters across the country need the most help, as well as the level and type of assistance they may need. Based on that information, we then help animal shelters in the United States reach and sustain no-kill by offering customized technical assistance, capacity building support, and financial assistance. Our solutions look different based on each community's need, but the results are the same: more no-kill shelters.

Best Friends' bench of 300+ expert trainers, coaches, and mentors work together to deliver a range of tools that transform animal sheltering systems. For most shelters, our free online lifesaving library with comprehensive playbooks, best practice manuals, webinars, and e-learning courses, that cover a range of topics is exactly what they need to accelerate their progress to no-kill.

For the shelters that have the most lives to save, Best Friends takes a hands-on approach, providing one-to-one coaching and mentoring for shelter leadership, staff, and animal control officers. Through these partnerships, Best Friends experts work alongside shelter staff to build trusting relationships, conduct assessment, share best practices, and provide personalized guidance. We even embed our own staff in temporary, but long-term roles within priority shelters for intensive lifesaving and leadership support.

And, because we can't work directly with every shelter that needs help, and because we have many incredible partners around the country with the capability and capacity to share best practices, we are scaling up our efforts to facilitate peer-to-peer connections.

By convening partners together through lunch and learns, round tables, cohorts, and coalitions, and by incentivizing peer-to-peer mentorships, we are helping connect partners to one another to strengthen shared learning, accelerate lifesaving, elevate other leaders, and replicate systems change faster than we could ever do alone.

Going further, faster with technology

Innovative technology allows us to deepen and broaden our impact

- **ARRANGE** virtual meet and greets between homeless pets and potential forever homes
- **PROVIDE** remote volunteer, foster, and kitten finder trainings
- **COORDINATE** transports and reduce duplicative efforts
- **OFFER** virtual lifesaving consults + ongoing coaching
- **DELIVER** remote trainings for animal control officers and shelter leaders
- **SUPPORT** community-based care for pets with new mobile apps
- **SHARE** resources with shelter and rescue partners
- **ENGAGE** advocates across the country with digital tools

Thanks to you, we are saving lives today and preparing the next generation of no-kill leaders as they transform animal shelters. And we know that it works. Organizations that partner with Best Friends save lives 3.5x faster than those that don't.

These solutions work

While it takes hard work and dedication to maintain no-kill, our data shows that it is highly sustainable. The longer a shelter is no-kill, the more likely it is to remain no-kill. Over 91% of shelters that achieve no-kill (year 1) remain no-kill the following year (year 2). And on average, 50% of shelters that lost no-kill status returned to being no-kill in the following year (year 3). Your support not only means that more shelters will reach the no-kill benchmark, but it also enables their continued lifesaving success, year after year.

MORE THAN 3,100 CATS entered Georgia's Hall County Animal Shelter (HCAS) in 2018. Only 46% of those cats were saved. Just one year later, the number of cats entering the shelter shrank by 1,100, and the cat save rate skyrocketed to 82%.

How did they do it? Hard work and commitment – with help from Best Friends, local leadership and a coalition of lifesaving partners throughout the state, proving the power of collaboration.

Shelter leadership participated in Best Friends' statewide animal welfare summit and then welcomed in the Best Friends shelter outreach team to conduct a shelter assessment. Our team evaluated the shelter's policies and provided detailed recommendations on how the HCAS could save more lives.

Best Friends supported the implementation of these recommendations with a range of services, including:

- **FINANCIAL SUPPORT:** a grant of \$25,000 to the Humane Society of Northeast Georgia to supported programming to decrease cat intake at HCAS
- **TRAINING:** Best Friends trained HCAS animal control officers on mitigating cat complaints
- **ADVOCATING:** Alongside shelter leadership, Best Friends staff presented recommendations to county commissioners, who approved budget changes for lifesaving programs

Today, the shelter is nearly no-kill thanks to effective new programs and people willing to help.

3 / Mobilizing the Public

Simply put, we cannot Save Them All alone. Without true systemic change, it will be impossible to achieve more lifesaving outcomes. Lasting change will take the support of partners like you, community engagement to inspire and sustain community-supported sheltering, and the power of legislation.

Change begins with creating the social and political will for increased local lifesaving. Best Friends is working to change hearts and minds through powerful messaging surrounding dogs and cats in shelters. We are creating positive change for the most at-risk pets, together, through targeted campaigns and public service announcements that increase awareness of puppy and kitten mills, breed discrimination, community cats, and pet-friendly housing.

Next comes grassroots organizing to create compassionate communities nationwide. That is why Best Friends formed the 2025 Action Team, a community-driven, grassroots

Advocacy saves lives

Like you, we believe that puppy mills have no place in a society that cares about all living creatures. From small towns to big cities, our collective voices have spurred widespread legislative changes that will protect dogs in puppy mills and make it harder for commercial breeding facilities to operate.

Best Friends' puppy mill initiatives have led to some key wins in 2020, such as helping Maine become the nation's third state to ban the retail sale of commercially bred pets.

California is also a big priority in no-kill goals. Best Friends co-sponsored a statewide ban on retail pet sales in 2017, but some disreputable pet stores started partnering with sham rescue groups so the stores could continue to sell commercially bred puppies imported from mills as "adoptions." This was technically legal because

the "rescue groups" had registered with California shelters under false pretenses, and animal shelters didn't realize they were scams. Pet stores continued selling as they always had, and continued during the COVID-19 shutdown, while many legitimate businesses were closing.

To address this loophole, Best Friends achieved the following, during the pandemic:

- Got the California governor's office to specify that retail puppy sales were non-essential
- Contacted all the shelters that had agreements with the sham rescue groups and convinced them to terminate those agreements
- Co-sponsored Bella's Act (AB 2152), which strengthened the existing pet sales law and closed the loophole



movement made up of individuals and organizations to working together to save more dogs and cats across the country. With nearly 25,000 volunteer members and growing, the 2025 Action Team pools collective energy to advance local, statewide and national change for the animals we all love so much. This is accomplished through advocacy training, self-serve resources, and even individual coaching.

Alongside Action Team members, Best Friends works to shape new legislation, spearhead pet-friendly bills, and repeal outdated laws that harm animals. When we begin working closely with a shelter partner, we perform an assessment of local and state laws to identify policies and ordinances that are counterproductive to lifesaving. Passionate community members help us generate and leverage political will that makes necessary policy changes possible.

And now we are getting creative in bringing in new players to help save pets. We are forging strategic partnerships with national and local organizations that are outside of animal welfare but can play a huge role in advancing our mission, like organizations that tackle poverty.

Take our innovative partnership with Catholic Charities USA, one of the largest affordable housing providers in the country. We are working together to implement a pilot program to connect vulnerable residents with resources that keep pets and families together and ensure that housing policies are pet-friendly.

Here's why: housing restrictions on pets is the second most common reason that pets are surrendered to shelters. In response, we are working to promote pet-inclusive policies in standard and affordable housing. These policies will prevent unnecessary separation of pets from their families and allow more pets to be fostered and adopted by any and all animal lovers.

Through the 2025 Action Team and other efforts to inspire community-supported sheltering, Best Friends is helping to accelerate no-kill efforts nationwide. Your generosity helps us ramp up our efforts to generate widespread support to Save Them All — both among everyday people through grassroots community organizing and in the halls of statehouses around the nation.

2020 accelerated our movement

One of the silver linings of the COVID-19 pandemic is how a transformational vision for animal sheltering accelerated from a pilot phase to a widespread solution. ***Today, we are on the cusp of the most exciting transformation in animal welfare in 150 years: community-supported sheltering.***

The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to do more virtually and emphasized that solving pet homelessness won't happen only inside a building. Animal welfare professionals will always play a pivotal role, but the answer isn't putting animals in shelters and housing them long-term.

When the pandemic first hit, animal shelters called on their communities for support, and those communities stepped up to be part of the solution on a level we have never seen before. As the pandemic unfolded, animal welfare organizations around the country didn't miss a beat when it came to expanding foster programs, shifting to virtual adoptions, and accelerating lifesaving efforts. In this creative and collaborative work, we found evidence that animal shelters play an essential role in our communities, and amid a pandemic, that role is changing for the better.

Now, Best Friends and our innovative sheltering partners around the country are building major foster home networks in place of more kennels and cages. We're teaching people what to do when they find stray dogs and how best to help them, rather than just funneling them all into a shelter. We're empowering community members with the tools and resources to help community cats and to return lost dogs directly to their homes.

The pandemic has created a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make this community-supported sheltering model the new standard in animal

welfare. As we start to reopen our communities, there is no reason that we can't keep these gains we made during the pandemic. In fact, they are a launching point to do even more. But time is of the essence, and harnessing the energy of this moment is critical. That's where our Road Map comes in.

Beyond the pandemic, the events of 2020 also shone a light on racial and social justice issues in our country. Best Friends believes animal sheltering is poised to embrace sweeping change that better supports every person in every community, no matter skin color, religious creed, gender expression, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. To fully meet this moment, we are activating:

- **INTERNALLY** to bring more inclusivity into our own organization's ranks
- **EXTERNALLY** to keep doing what we do best: support shelters to save lives and be more inclusive of all communities while doing so.

We know that where people are vulnerable, so too are pets. Animals that are still needlessly dying are more likely to be in communities where people have less access to critical quality of life services and are more vulnerable to economic crises and natural disasters. And, shelters with the biggest lifesaving gaps also tend to be in the most vulnerable communities. Our data-driven, targeted approach will deliver more resources to these areas facing greatest need, while lifting up and empowering local leaders, advocates and pet lovers in the process.

Support from people like you helps us reach the communities where resources can do the most good. And, it helps propel the community-supported sheltering model, accelerating the better and brighter future we're building, together.

You can help Save Them All

Thanks to partners like you, we've saved hundreds of thousands of animals like Olivier and Togo. But there are hundreds of thousands more who still need our help. Best Friends has the plan, and supporters like you can make it reality.

Thank you for your past generosity and kindness – everyone at Best Friends, and most especially the animals, are so grateful. And thank you for joining us on the Road to No-Kill 2025.

Together, we will Save Them All.

Our one-year funding goals for 2021 target resources for biggest lifesaving impact as we advance our vision of a better world through kindness to animals.

KEY INVESTMENT AREAS – STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	PROGRAMS	\$ IN MILLIONS
Saving Lives	Lifesaving Centers	\$16.7
	Best Friends Animal Sanctuary	\$20.2
	Sub-total	\$36.9
Supporting Shelters	Training	\$5.7
	Coaching	\$5.3
	Mentoring	\$4.5
	Sub-total	\$15.5
Mobilizing the Public	Advocacy and Legislation	\$1.2
	Community Engagement	\$9.7
	Sub-total	\$10.9
Total		\$63.3



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