

OUTCOME OF PETS ADOPTED DURING A WAIVED-FEE ADOPTION EVENT: MADDIE'S MATCHMAKER ADOPTATHON

S. L. MacArthur, J. K. Levy, P. A. Dingman, S. J. Tucker

Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL USA.

Campaigns to increase shelter pet adoptions by reducing or eliminating adoption fees are controversial due to concern they may increase risk of poor care or abandonment. The purpose of this study was to assess the outcome of pets adopted during a waived-fee adoption event in the San Francisco Bay Area in June 2011.

A survey regarding the adoption experience was sent to all 1,928 pet adopters. Pet and owner characteristics and pet lifestyle were compared between adopters who still had their pets 6-12 months post-adoption and those who did not.

A total of 57% of adopters completed the survey, reporting that 95% of cats and 93% of dogs were still in the home. Pets were no longer in the home due to return to the shelter (2% cats; 2% dogs), rehoming (2%; 2%), death (1%; 2%), or going missing (0.1%; 0.4%). Most pets lived predominantly indoors (95%; 93%), slept on the family bed (62%; 44%), and had been to a veterinarian (74%; 87%). Strong or very strong attachment to the pet was reported by 94% of adopters. There were no significant differences between the two groups based on pet attachment level, post-adoption lifestyle or healthcare, or perceptions regarding the adoption event.

The vast majority of pets adopted without a fee remained in the home. Owners of both retained and non-retained pets reported high attachment and integrated pets into their homes, suggesting that successful adoptions do not require payment of a fee. Free adoption promotions may increase adoptions without compromising quality of life.