

Effects of Housing Modifications on Welfare of Cats in a Municipal Animal Shelter

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Abstract

This is a retrospective study of cats housed in the adoptable population of a municipal open admission animal shelter. The total average annual intake of cats in this shelter is 4,000 cats with a total average daily occupancy of 67 cats overall. The objective was to assess the effects of variables of housing arrangements and sanitation protocols on the health and welfare of the cats during their length of stay in the shelter until adoption. The author examined patient medical records from the shelter for 2010, 2011, and 2012 to measure incidence of respiratory disease and monitor average length of stay. Incidence of disease was monitored by nasal and ocular discharge, sneezing, oral ulcers and loss of appetite. Behavioral observations included interaction with human caretakers, amount of time spent sleeping, and time spent hiding vs. active play behavior. Progressive step-wise modifications to housing arrangement, population management and cleaning protocol were made over a two year period. As a result of the observations the shelter has maintained the modifications to policies and procedures for housing management and stress reduction to improve the welfare for shelter cats