

Code Red: 11 Tips for Managing Intake During a Space Crisis

June 23, 2021, [Kristen Hassen](#)

Human Animal Support Services by American Pets Alive!

<https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/blog/code-red-tips-for-managing-intake-during-a-space-crisis/>

If your shelter is full or nearly full, you may find you need to ask the community to help keep non-emergency pets out of the shelter for several weeks or more. Here are 11 tips on how to prevent euthanasia for space AND keep your community on your side.

1. Put out an emergency news release asking for help.

Here is an example from Palm Valley Animal Society in Texas:

<https://texasborderbusiness.com/pvas-in-emergency-space-crisis-asking-for-the-communitys-help-to-prevent-euthanasia/>

2. Make a sign and or graphic showing how close you are to capacity.

Some organizations have created capacity signs with an arrow that points to how full a shelter is on a particular day. Green means ample space. Yellow means tight. Red means at capacity. You can also add purple to mean above capacity. This easy visual engages the public and lets them know when you really need help, with a glance



3. Stream walk-through videos showing pets in their kennels.

You can give the public an idea of the number of pets needing immediate homes, and introduce people to the animals. These kinds of videos grab attention and get people to come and help. Some shelters post videos daily on their social media accounts accessible to the public.

4. Use the right language for the situation.

The term “managed intake” can easily be misunderstood by the public. Instead, consider using plain language that people who don’t work in animal welfare will easily understand. Try: “We are full and only accepting animals who need immediate help. This ‘essential intake’ policy is to prevent euthanasia for space.”

5. Don’t “close” all intake.

Move to an “essential intake only,” status, so you’re keeping pets out who can be safely housed in the community until the space crisis has passed—but not closing the door on sick, injured, and orphaned pets who do need your immediate help.

The National Animal Control Association provides guidelines for defining essential intake versus non-essential: <https://www.nacanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/4.Essential-Animal-Services-During-COVID-19.pdf>

According to these guidelines, *nonessential* intake includes intake of healthy, friendly stray animals who are not in immediate danger and owned pets. *Essential intake* includes sick and injured animals and dogs posing a public safety threat.

6. Put out the Bat-Signal in the media and online.

Let the public know you urgently need help. Here we’ve got examples of effective emergency appeals for foster homes and adopters: <https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/blog/how-to-write-an-urgent-social-media-plea-for-adopters-and-fosters/>

7. Make it easy for people to help the same day you ask.

Sweep away ALL barriers that get in the way of people fostering and adopting.

8. Expand your open adoption/foster hours.

Open your doors and keep them open. This means people who can’t make it during regular hours, can get involved and get pets out of your shelter.

9. Plan an adoption event.

Get creative and plan a Midnight Muttiness event or host a foster kitten adoption party. These are attention-getting events that draw folks in—and get pets out.

10. Utilize supported self-rehoming.

Direct pet owners who are surrendering to try to adopt out their own pets via *Home-to-Home, Rehome, or social media platforms*. Encouraging a mutual aid system during times of space crisis can empower people to help each other!

11. Ask the public to hold found pets for at least 48 hours.

This increases the animals' chances of getting home, and keeps them out of the shelter. Most lost dogs are found less than a mile from their homes. You can ask the public to file a found report, put up signs, and post on social media. Offer food, supplies, and other assistance.