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Shelter and rescue programmes associated with higher live release and lower return rates for dogs

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Abstract

Typically, animal shelters and rescues are judged on their live release rates. This research explores the relative impact that shelter traits and programmes have on positive outcomes for dogs. Using a survey of 370 animal shelters and rescues across the US, it concludes that eschewing the use of breed labels for all dogs that do not appear to be pure-bred, having a robust foster programme, and using a matching programme are correlated with higher live release and lower return rates. Resources are not wholly determinative of success — it is the programmes shelters and rescues implement, not simply their human and financial resources — that are associated with positive outcomes.

Keywords: animal welfare, breed labels, foster programmes, live release rates for dogs, matching programmes, transfer programmes