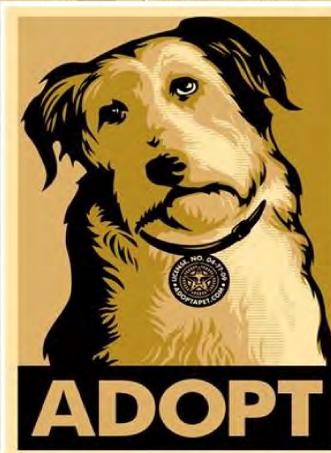


Assessing Risk Factors Associated with Adoption Success in Shelters

Courtney Butts¹, Julie Levy¹, Jaime Willson¹, Emily Weiss²

¹Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program, University of Florida, ²ASPCA Shelter Research and Development, Benton, Kansas



Introduction

Animal shelter marketing practices that reduce or waive pet adoption fees to increase adoptions are controversial due to fears that discounting fees may “devalue” pets and lower the chance that the pet will have a high quality life.

Objective

The objective of this study was to examine the association of adoption fees with pet lifestyle, owner attachment to the pet, and increased risk of being lost from the home.

Methods

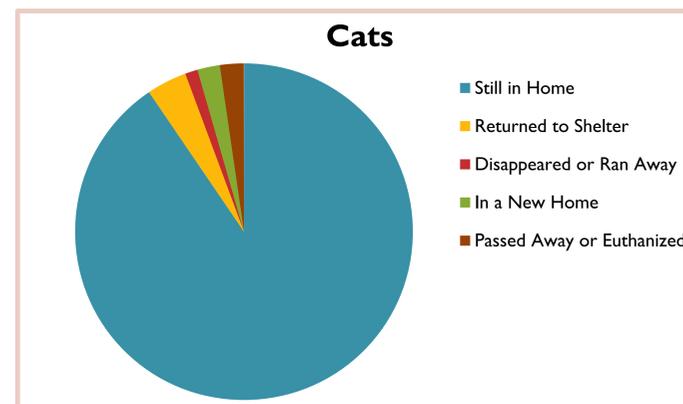
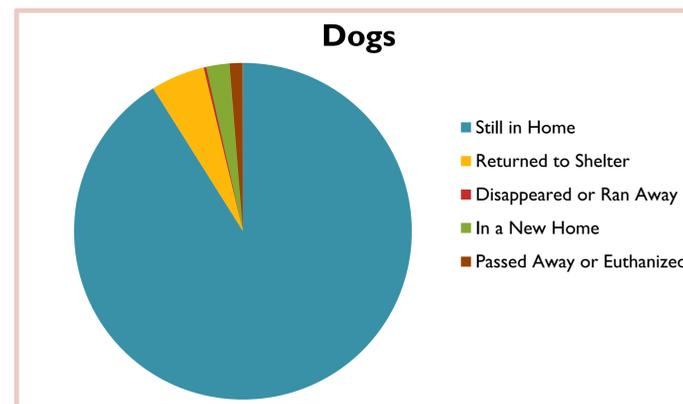
Adoption data was collected from three large animal shelters in different regions of the country. A list of all pet adopters from April 2010-March 2011 was generated and those pet owners were surveyed on a variety of topics including pet and owner demographics, adoption fee, shelter experience, and quality of care provided. The results were analyzed for correlations between percent retention in the home and amount of adoption fee charged, amount of adoption fee and quality of care provided, and level of attachment to the pet. Adopter factors included age, children, pet lifestyle, income and attachment to pet. Population proportions were compared with the Chi square tests. $P < 0.05$ was considered significant.

Results

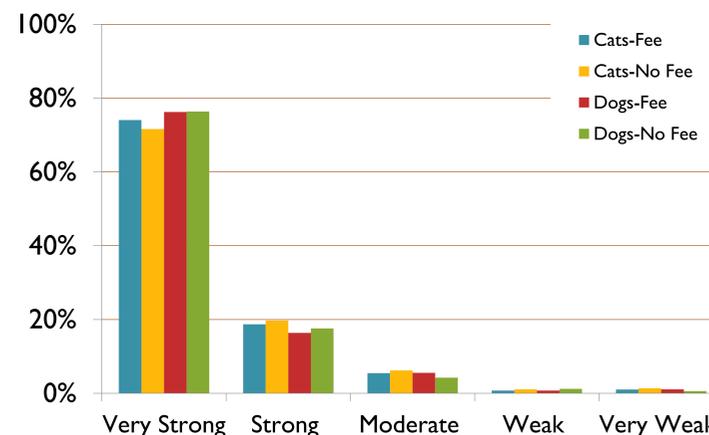
A total of 48% of adopters completed the survey, reporting that 91% of both cats and dogs were still in the home. Pets were lost from the home via return to the shelter (4% cats; 5% dogs), rehoming (2%; 2%), death (2%; 1%), or disappearing (1%; 0%). Most pets lived predominantly indoors (93%; 90%), slept on the family bed (59%; 45%), and had been to a veterinarian (85%; 92%). Strong or very strong attachment to the pet was reported by 93% of adopters.

Conclusions

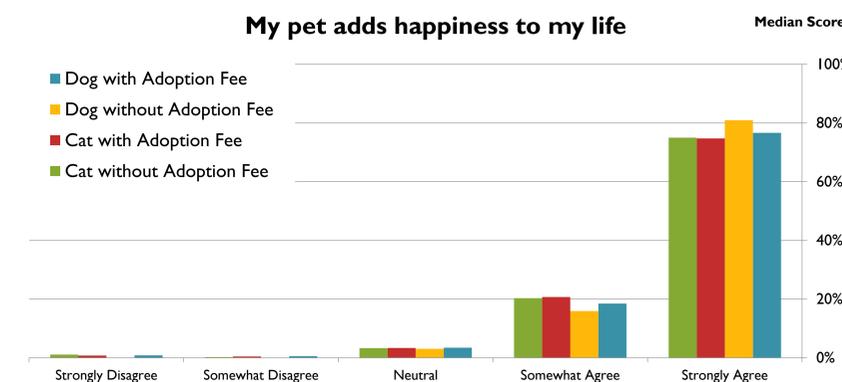
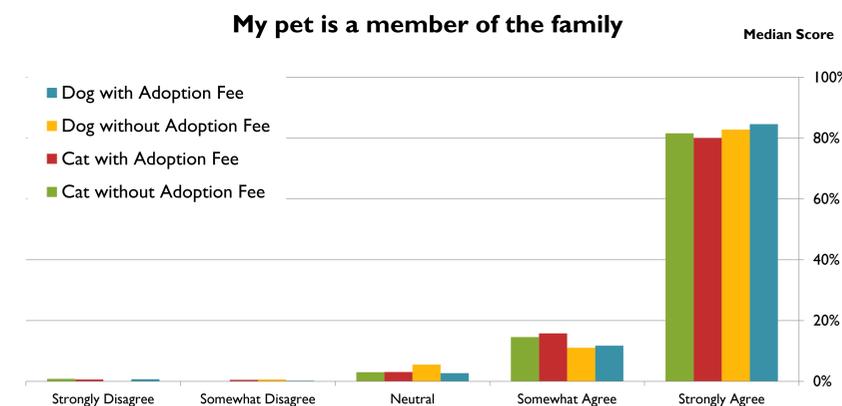
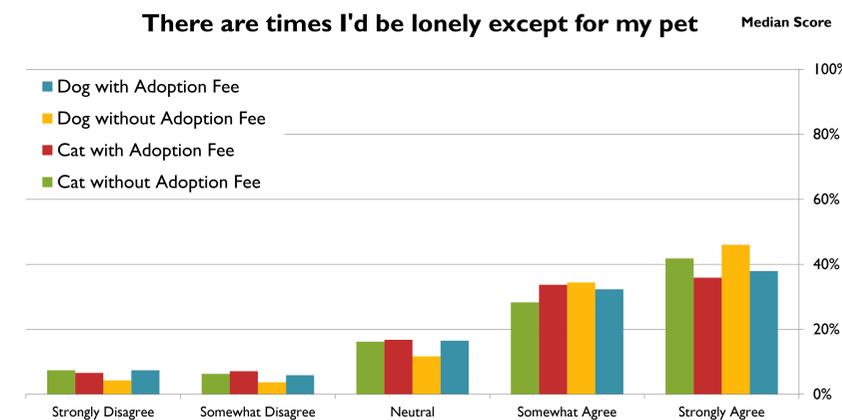
These results suggest that pets adopted with or without a fee have similar rates of retention in the home, similar lifestyles, and similar owner attachment. Shelter protocols that use fee waivers to increase adoptions are unlikely to have negative impacts on the quality of adoptive homes.



Responses of adopters to the question, “Where is the pet now?”



Attachment reported by adopters to their new pets as a function of whether or not they paid an adoption fee



Adopter responses to selected attachment scale questions. There were no significant differences in responses from adopters who paid a fee and those that did not.

