



CENTER FOR  
THE ENVIRONMENT  
& WELFARE

# Struggling Shelters:

Local Pet Shelters  
Feel Shortchanged  
due to Name and  
Donor Confusion

**A New Survey Sheds Light on the Pet Shelter Crisis**





As Americans participate in Giving Tuesday, local pet shelters and rescues are facing a moment of crisis. *CBS News* recently **reported**, “animal shelters across the country say they are at 95% capacity and approaching a crisis level.”

There’s no shortage of generous Americans willing to help shelter pets but donors often incorrectly conflate their local shelter with national organizations like The Humane Society of the United States and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). This mistake can lead to money going towards those two organizations, which are unaffiliated with local shelters and only dedicate 1-2% of their budgets as financial grants to local pet shelters.

*Past polling by the Center for the Environment and Welfare has shown that approximately 80% of the public incorrectly believes that the ASPCA and The Humane Society of the United States are affiliated with local humane societies and societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals.*

**80%**

mistakenly think “The Humane Society of the U.S. is an umbrella group that represents thousands of local humane societies across America.”

**81%**

mistakenly think “The ASPCA is an umbrella group that represents thousands of local SPCAs across America.”

“HSH is overburdened, over capacity for care, healthy pets are at risk of dying, and the doors could close after 70 years of lifesaving. This is dangerously reversing decades of work to save the lives of healthy, adoptable pets.”

**- Humane Society of Hobart**

“We are getting calls 24/7 on stray animals... I have never seen it this bad.”

**- Henderson Humane Society**

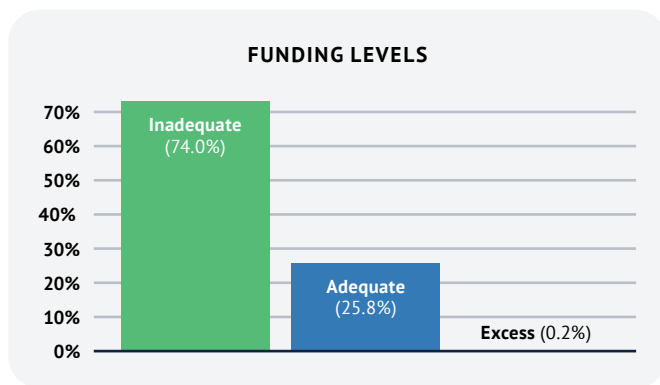
“Dogs have been entering the shelter at an alarming rate all summer, between strays and surrendered dogs there’s just no room left.”

**- Associated Humane Societies, Newark**



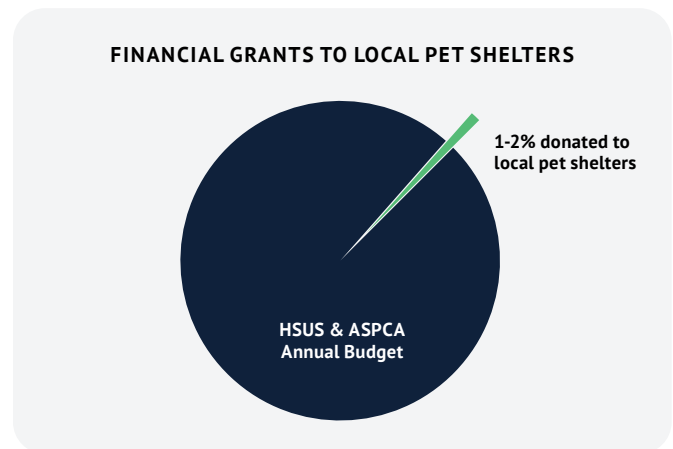
A new survey of local shelters and rescues sheds light on these financial woes caused by donor confusion.

**According to the new survey, 74% of local pet shelters and rescues describe their current funding levels as inadequate.** (Figure 1)



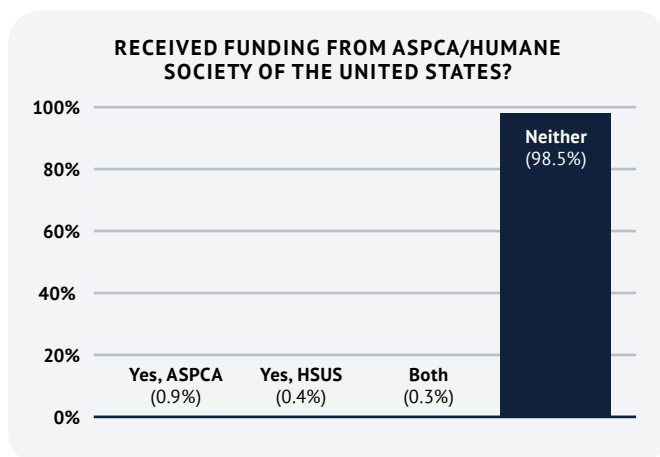
(Figure 1)

Despite bringing in hundreds of millions of dollars each year, **The Humane Society of the United States and the ASPCA only give 1-2% of their budgets in financial grants to local pet shelters each year, according to their 2021 tax filings.** (Figure 3)



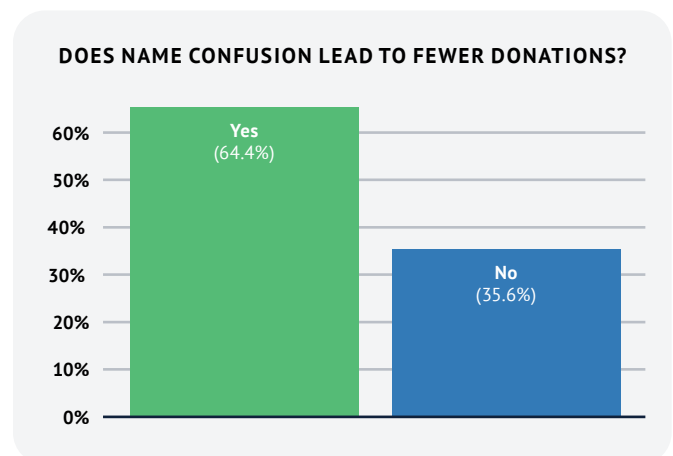
(Figure 3)

And these shelters are not seeing support from the two wealthiest national animal groups, the ASPCA and The Humane Society of the United States. **98% of the 1,969 local pet shelters and rescues surveyed reported not receiving financial assistance from either of these organizations.** (Figure 2)



(Figure 2)

Perhaps more concerning are the findings that these local organizations believe The Humane Society of the United States and the ASPCA undermine their donations. 76% of the local shelters and rescues surveyed believe donors are confused by the branding of The Humane Society of the United States and the ASPCA, and **almost two thirds of them believe this confusion has led to fewer donations.** (Figure 4)

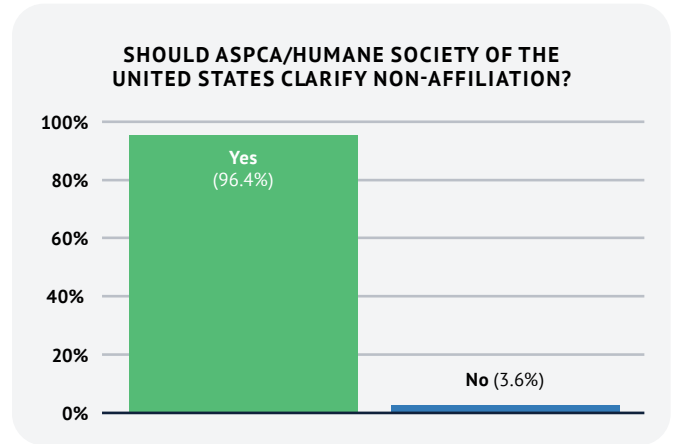


(Figure 4)



**Pet shelters and rescues were nearly unanimous with over 96% believing the ASPCA and The Humane Society of the United States should clarify their lack of affiliation with the thousands of local pet shelters and rescues around the country. (Figure 5)**

If you make a donation this Giving Tuesday, make sure you are aware of the distinction between The Humane Society of the United States, the ASPCA, and your local shelter. It could make all the difference for pets in need.



(Figure 5)

## In Their Own Words:

Numerous humane organizations have issued statements and warnings in response to the confusion about their affiliation with The Humane Society of the United States and the ASPCA.

*“For many years when Klamath Humane Society has asked for donations, people tell us they have already donated to HSUS (Humane Society of the United States). Due to the misleading advertisements HSUS does, people think we get money from HSUS. This is completely false. Klamath Humane Society has never received one penny from HSUS or any other national animal organization.”*

**- Klamath Humane Society**

*“Is the VBSPCA connected with Virginia Beach Animal Control or the ASPCA? No. The Virginia Beach Animal Control Bureau is a city agency... In fact, all SPCAs and humane societies are independent from one another, meaning the VBSPCA is not connected to any of the other SPCAs or Humane Societies in Hampton Roads. We all raise our own funds, and we operate with different policies and programs.”*

**- Virginia Beach SPCA**

*“While many people believe that the ASPCA funds local shelters like Houston SPCA, no SPCA across the country is part of the ASPCA organization.”*

**- Houston SPCA**

*“The major problems that most SPCAs have is that the ASPCA does not fund these agencies. We receive no money from them at all.”*

**- Nassau County SPCA**

*“There are multiple times a year when we hear from someone who has donated over the phone or online to a national organization and has called to see if we’ve received the donation.”*

**- Central Missouri Humane Society**



## Methodology:

The Center for the Environment and Welfare surveyed 1,969 local pet shelters and rescues across America. The organizations were asked whether they described themselves as a shelter or a rescue, where their support came from, how they described their level of funding, if they received funding from The Humane Society of the United States or the ASPCA, if they thought confusion existed between their organization and The Humane Society of the United States and the ASPCA, if they felt the confusion led to fewer donations, and if they believed that The Humane Society of the United States and the ASPCA should clarify their lack of affiliation with local organizations. Additionally, they were asked to provide basic contact information about their organization.

### About the Center for the Environment and Welfare:

The Center for the Environment and Welfare helps consumers and stakeholders navigate issues related to animal welfare and sustainability. The Center evaluates policies, proposals, and major players in these issue areas, and encourages support for groups and programs that provide tangible benefits to alleviate animal suffering.