

Dear Editor:

Thank you for your story “A Tribute to Mutts” (May-June 2010, p.34). I love our mutts, and we will probably never own a purebred. My only quibbles are your characterization of cages at the shelter you visited. Many of us are working to change the language of cages, wards, and other such language; I think it’s an important step as we reframe shelters as adoption destinations.

Additionally, you wrote that most boutique stores don’t smell like bleach and cat food. Shelters should not smell that way either! If they still do, that’s part of the problem; the olfactory sense is very important to many adopters. Again, thanks for the story and insights for shelters!

—David Wintz
*Shelter Program Manager
 Humane Strategies Inc.
 Fort Collins, Colo.*

Editor’s note: Thanks for writing! We definitely understand your concern. At *Animal Sheltering*, we try to advocate for better standards in shelters, and we absolutely agree that a positive presentation of the animals and the facility as a whole is crucial to the mission.

That said, while we work toward the ideal, we do want to report the realities. And many shelters—whether due to lack of adequate funding or staffing, competing priorities, or simply because they haven’t considered the issue—are still bound to traditional cages, and don’t always smell like roses (especially first thing in the morning).

As the field continues to progress, we hope that will become less of an issue. Thanks for all you’re doing to help move shelters along.



Five years ago, as New Orleans and the Gulf Coast woke up to the nightmarish aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, thousands of animal lovers around the country and around the world watched their televisions and read their newspapers in growing concern. The Big Easy was still flooded, rescuers were overwhelmed, and many of the people and animals of the region were in desperate need of help.

To some, it seemed there was nothing to do but watch and hope. For others, simply watching was unbearable. They had to do something. And hundreds did—whether that something amounted to simply giving money or actually working online to help reunite pets who’d been separated from their guardians. Many people took time off their own jobs and went south to help in person, as members of rescue teams searching the flooded wards or going house to house in destroyed buildings in Mississippi, or doing the sweaty work of caring for and cleaning up after the hundreds of animals taken to temporary shelters. Animal welfare organizations around the country and around the world sent people to help.

Amidst the chaos and grief of a national tragedy, the people of this field showed extraordinary compassion and generosity, and we learned valuable lessons about where

our response needed strengthening for future disasters.

Now, as the Gulf Coast again faces a crisis—this one manmade—we take the time to remember those humans and animals who died five years ago, those who lived through it, those who lost their homes, and those who—thanks to the hard work and dedication of people like you—found them again. And we vow to continue reporting on the work that will help us prepare for the future, to help the field meet crisis with compassion, resourcefulness, and very large umbrellas.

In this issue, we highlight the preparation of nine Virginia communities that have been working together to make sure they’re ready to cope with future disasters, whatever form they take.

And as always, if you’ve got an approach that’s working for the people and animals in your community—whether it’s related to disaster preparation or just good, old-fashioned kitten care or cleaning—we want to hear about it! Drop us a line at asm@humanesociety.org to share your stories, ask for advice, or let us know how we can improve your magazine.

—Carrie, James, Jim, and Shevaun
Animal Sheltering magazine staff