Director's Checklist for Urgent Kennel Census Reduction

Shelter Name:

Director:

Date:

Current Census:

Goal Census:

☐ **Send out an SOS every day (news release 2x per week, social media daily).**
Send out one to two news releases weekly and share daily social media posts to keep the public in the loop. Use words like 'urgent,' 'emergency,' and 'crisis.' Tell them if you're facing the possibility of having to euthanize for space and be totally transparent. Ask for help and then make it fast and easy for people to adopt. If you do it right, when you ask for help, people will be able to come and get a pet right away. When it is urgent, you need all the help you can get so remove barriers that slow down placement. Here is an example of an urgent news release from El Paso and one from Tucson.

☐ **Waive reclaim fees.**
Or do what HASS pilot shelter KC Pet Project is doing and create a Reclaim Fee Forgiveness Program. Make it simple and inexpensive for owners to get their lost pets back and increase the number of pets who get reclaimed. This is one important step to increase how many pets are returned home. Your organization should also identify and do away with unnecessary barriers to reclaim. For more expert tips on increasing the number of pets returned to owners, check out this training by HASS founding executive committee member Gina Knepp.

☐ **Make every pet visible and available the day they enter the shelter, even pets with ringworm and those recovering from illness and injury.**
Such a simple idea, but to many shelters it seems unthinkable. The best part of trying this? It's free, easy to implement, and doesn't require much more than simple modifications to standard paperwork. If you're nervous to make the change, try piloting the program for just 30 days and see what happens! Here's how.

☐ **Ask lost pet finders to hold pets for 48 hours to allow the owner time to reclaim them.**
Follow the lead of Cabot Animal Services and their First 48 program. Studies show that lost pets are often less than a few hundred feet from their homes. Keeping lost pets in their neighborhoods can drastically improve their chances of getting home—and keeps them out of the shelter. This is one of many ways organizations are rethinking the future of helping lost pets get home.

☐ **Start an animal mutual aid Facebook group.**
The Austin Pets Alive! [PASS](#) (positive alternatives to shelter surrender) Facebook group helps nearly 1,000 pet owners each month keep their animals out of the shelter. It's a highly effective strategy for reducing shelter intake and the best part is that it can be run with minimal staff and volunteer support because the idea is that people can and want to help one another! Here is a [step-by-step guide](#) to starting your owner community animal mutual aid Facebook group. Share this community [resource guide](#) on your website in a VERY prominent location.

☐ **Create a [Friendly Finder program](#) and give those who find lost pets everything they need to hold onto them!**
According to LifeLine Animal Project, "This has been a great way to divert lost pets from having to spend even one night in a shelter. We ask our community finders to consider keeping the pet for just five days during the 'hold' period until that pet becomes available for adoption." Here is an example of how LifeLine promotes this program [on social media.](#) This program has been a success not only for dogs and cats, but for [one lucky chicken, too!](#) Here is [how to set it up in chameleon](#).

☐ **Help families keep their pets.**
As the federal eviction moratorium expires we're going to see an increase in families losing their homes. This may result in more cats, dogs, and other pets entering your shelter, so consider taking a proactive approach. Be part of an [eviction prevention fair](#) in your community. Use this as an opportunity to counsel pet owners on how to get help if faced with eviction. Ask your entire staff and volunteer team to read the Keeping Families Together [Eviction Response Toolkit,](#) and talk about how you can use it to keep families together in your community.

☐ **Create a [safety net foster](#) program (for owned pets)** like the one at LifeLine Animal Project to help pet owners in housing transition or crisis find temporary foster homes for their pets. Here is another great example of a successful [safety net foster program](#). Follow [these tips](#) for recruiting more foster caregivers.

☐ **Create a matchmaker list to leverage every possible adopter and foster.**
With so many animal services becoming remote, most organizations have a way for potential foster caregivers and adopters to reach out about pets they're interested in adopting. It's easy! All potential adopters and fosters fill out a form about what they're looking for (in general terms), and then are matched with incoming pets. [Here's](#) how the foster-on-deck program at HASS pilot shelter Humane Rescue Alliance works. This is part of the HASS [Intake-to-Placement](#) element—and at [Pima Animal Care Center](#), using a matchmaker list shortened the length of stay for pets to just three days, versus 10 days for pets not matched on intake. Further streamline your foster program with [these tips](#).

☐ **Embrace [supported self-rehoming](#).**

Greenville Animal Care created an entire self-rehoming program. In their first several months, they kept more than 500 pets out of the shelter by using both Home-to-Home, Rehome software, and with staff helping pet owners make the rehoming placements themselves. The potential return on investment of this program is huge and you can learn how to do it [here](#).

☐ **Return pets in the field.**
Make sure all your animal control officers have microchip scanners on their trucks. Empower them to get lost pets home without them having to enter the shelter. [One county](#) reported their animal control was able to return 56% of lost pets home without them having to go to the shelter.

☐ **Clear your long stay pets out of the system, faster.**
Work backwards off your long-stay list. Engage staff and volunteers to be part of getting these pets into homes and out of the shelter. [Here's how](#).