

# No kill controversy

By Virginia Sullivan

With the abortion and assisted-suicide controversies raging in this country, there is little surprise that another right-to-life versus quality-of-life debate is capturing the nation's attention. Around the country, no-kill animal shelters are opening their doors and full-service shelters such as the SPCA of Texas are suffering from a back-lash of community disapproval for their "kill policy."

This phenomena has an ironic twist to it since back in the 1930's, the Society began as a no-kill agency. It was not long before an overwhelming numbers of animals made euthanasia the only humane choice for a group dedicated to the prevention of cruelty to animals.

The SPCA of Texas tried the no-kill policy once again in the early 1980's, but it still wasn't working. As waiting lists got longer and longer, people unable to keep their pets began turning to other alternatives. When the Society began following up with the people who had been on the waiting lists for any length of time, they found that often the owners had put the animals down themselves by shooting, poisoning, drowning or other means. Others had simply given them away to people with questionable reasons for

wanting the animals or had just turned them loose on the streets...

On August 15, 1989, the SPCA made the decision that a painless death was better than abandoning the animals to an uncertain and often excruciating fate such as the slow death

remainder of their lives in a small cage while many of the animals they have to turn away eventually end up with us."

Beth Neely who is a member of the Board of Directors of the non-profit, no-kill Operation Kindness in Carrollton sees it slightly different. "We just try to give people a choice. We try instead to focus on education of the public." Neely does not hesitate to say that the SPCA of Texas does a good job. "They do what they have to do to take care of the huge population of animals they are given. I understand their position. I just can't personally deal with it (euthanasia). A lot of people can't."

The underlying theme found when talking to representative from both sides of this issue is the love of animals. Perhaps both types of facilities have a place, but the bottom line is that Operation Kindness can boast of 2,400 adoptions last year whereas the SPCA of Texas

accepted over 17,000 animals and can claim responsibility for over 8,000 adoptions in the same amount of time.


Both Neely and Smith are in complete agreement that the most important area to concentrate on is in the education of the public about the importance of spaying and neutering their pets. 



Photo by Steve Saxton

*It would be wonderful if all animals found homes, but that isn't the way it works. These are some of the 17,000+ animals taken in at the SPCA of Texas in 1992. Over 8,000 were adopted; the rest were euthanized quickly and painlessly.*

of starvation. The SPCA of Texas Director of Operations Steve Smith explains the full-service facility's position. "It would be wonderful if there were homes for all of the animals out there. Unfortunately, that is not the way it works. We take all animals, in all conditions and we do our best with them.

"With many of the no-kill facilities, it's 'out of sight, out of mind.' The reality is that the animals they do keep may spend the