

## Executive Summary

The Center for Research Design and Analysis (CRDA) was contracted by Maddie's Fund to conduct a state-wide telephone survey to assess Nevada pet owner and non pet owner demographics, opinions about spay and neutering their pets, and attitudes toward animal shelters in general. The data collection took place between November 2007 and February 2008, and all calls were made by trained professional interviewers from the Center for Research Design and Analysis (CRDA) survey lab on the University of Nevada, Reno campus. There were a total of 1989 numbers called initially, and 608 interviews were conducted, 4 of which were considered partial interviews. The overall raw response rate was 31.7%; however, the final cooperation rate, which includes only those households actually contacted, was 30.6%

There were a total of 608 Nevada residents who completed the survey. Of those 608, 4 were partial completes, 403 were pet (cat and dog) owners and 200 were non pet-owners. Of the 604 total completed interviews, the respondents varied in socioeconomic status, although 10.8% fell below the U.S. Poverty Threshold (see Appendix A).

Looking at the demographics of pet owners by themselves, these 403 pet owner respondents were primarily college educated, middle to upper socioeconomic status, had an average of 2.88 adults per household, and had an average of .75 children per household. Non-pet owners were similar in socioeconomic status, but had a smaller average number of adults in the household ( $M=1.79$ ), and slightly less children per household ( $M=.63$ ).

Of the 403 pet owner households, 191 had cats and 321 had dogs, while 104 had both a cat and a dog. The average number of cats in the household was 2.08, while the average number of dogs in the household was slightly lower at 1.72. Most households had less than three cats or dogs in the household.

While 61% of the pet owners did not adopt any of their pets from an animal shelter, approximately 39% of the current pet owners adopted at least one or both of their pet(s) from an animal shelter. Of 20% that did adopt all of their animals from an animal shelter, the average number of dogs adopted was 1.52, and the average number of cats was slightly higher at 1.72. Of the 19% that adopted some, but not all, of their pets from an animal shelter, the average number of dogs adopted was .94 and the average number of cats was again slightly higher at 1.02.

The most common reasons given by pet owners as to why they chose *not* to adopt from an animal shelter in rank order included: 1) they preferred a specific breed of cat or dog; 2) they adopted their animal directly from someone else; 3) they wanted a younger pet, such as a kitten or puppy, and 4) they received their pet as a gift. In smaller numbers, but still mentioned as a reason why they chose not to adopt from an animal shelter included: 5) it is too difficult or emotional to choose an animal from a shelter; 6) animals from a shelter are less well-behaved or 7) less healthy; 8) not aware of animal shelters in their community, and 9) too costly.

A vast majority (81%) of the pet owners spayed or neutered all of their pets, while an additional 8% stated that at least some of their pets had been altered. Only 11% did not have any of their pets spayed or neutered.

Of those 11% that did not have their animals altered, the most common reasons given by pet owners as to why they chose *not* to spay or neuter their animal in rank order included: 1) age of the pet; 2) procedure too expensive; 3) they intend to breed; 4) the procedure would harm the appearance of the cat or dog; and 5) inconvenience.

Most of the pet owners (92%) had taken their pets to the veterinarian within the past three years, and these pet owners were also more likely to adopt from animal shelters.

The survey also assessed the likelihood of future pet ownership by all respondents (current pet owners and non-pet owners) in the study. Overall, it was almost evenly split, with 50% stating that they were either somewhat or very likely to get a pet or another pet in the future and approximately the other half (47%) stating that there were either somewhat or very likely to *not* get a pet in the future. The remaining 3% were undecided. Current pet owners, whether having previous adoption experience from animal shelters or not, were more likely than non-pet owners to adopt from an animal shelter in the future.

Respondents that answered that they were either somewhat or very likely to get a pet in the future were also asked how likely that pet would come from an animal shelter. About 75% said they'd likely adopt from a shelter. Of those 25% that stated they'd probably not adopt from a shelter or were undecided, reasons given were similar to the reasons given by current pet owners above as to why they hadn't adopted their current pets from animal shelters. For example, 1) they preferred a specific breed; 2) they wanted a kitten or puppy; 3) they were planning to adopt from someone else; 4) they thought their pets were less well-behaved; 5) they thought they were less healthy; and 6) they thought it would be too emotional to choose.

Respondents were also asked about giving up pets in the past. The most common reasons for giving up a pet in rank order were: 1) behavioral problems; followed by 2) moving; 3) a conflict between the pet and one of the household members; 4) pets not being allowed by the landlord; 5) too many pets; 6) allergies. There were clear differences in reasons as to why current pet owners and non-current pet owners gave up a pet in the past. For example, current pet owners were more likely to have given up a pet due to behavioral problems, while non-current pet owners were more likely to have given up a pet due to allergies, time commitment, or cost.

Overall, respondents had a positive view of animal shelters, with 83% indicated that they had either a somewhat or very favorable view of animal shelters. Pet owners were slightly more aware than non-pet owners to have heard about Maddie's Fund

