

December 19th, 2019

Romany Runnalls

romany@aquariummortgages.com

President of The Okanagan Humane Society

3598 Windermere Rd.

Kelowna, British Columbia, V1W3Y4

Dear Ms. Runnalls

The Okanagan Humane Society has done some fantastic work for the Okanagan community over the years. Continuing to improve upon the methods used for raising awareness and support in the community can be significant in the continued increase of animals helped by OHS per year.

To continue assisting in efforts of raising awareness for animals in the Okanagan, this report has identified five methods that are important to your current supporters as well as evidence suggesting that it could help continue the growth of support seen year to year.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this manner. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me through email at connor.runnalls@gmail.com

Sincerely,



Connor Runnalls

Exploring Methods Of Increasing Awareness For The Okanagan Humane Society

For: Ms. Romany Runnalls

President of Okanagan Humane Society

Kelowna, B.C.



Written by: Connor Runnalls, Engl 301 Student

University of British Columbia

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Abstract

The Okanagan Humane Society is a volunteer-based animal welfare society that focuses primarily on feral and stray cat population control programs such as trap neuter release and rehoming. This charity is funded mainly by donations and adoption fees, with some help from granting agencies to carry out all programs and events. As such, it is vital that a charity such as OHS is as efficient as possible with expenditures that do not directly assist the animals. This report explores cost-effective methods for raising awareness about the society in order to continue increasing yearly donations and adoptions and therefore helping more animals. With the help of data collected from a survey sent to OHS followers, five recommendations have been suggested for implementation. Of these suggestions, three are original implementations, while the last two are modifications to awareness-raising methods already being incorporated. The summary of the report, as per the request of the Ms. Romany Runnalls, includes a full recommendation on how to approach implementing these suggestions, and doing so in the most time effective manner possible.

Introduction

What is the Okanagan Humane Society?

Established in 1996, the Okanagan Humane Society is a volunteer-based organization dedicated to spaying and neutering companion animals for the prevention of animal overpopulation and unwanted litters. Based out of the Okanagan region, the Okanagan Humane Society does not have a designated shelter similar to those of the BCSPCA, rather, all animals taken in by the society are cared for in foster homes. Operations for programs such as trap-neuter-release and fostering are funded through donations, adoption fees, and some grants, though nothing compared to the donations the BCSPCA receives. With that said, the program is thriving for a volunteer-based organization. In 2018 alone, the Okanagan Humane Society cared for 1164 animals, which are comparable to the averaged sum of animals helped per BCSPCA location (1085 animals per location; including their call centre, Provincial Office, and wildlife rehab centres). In total, OHS has helped 18,052 animals from 1996-2018, without taking into consideration the potentially hundreds of thousands of animals prevented from being born through spay/neuter programs.

Programs Provided

The Okanagan Humane Society implements two primary programs for animal welfare. The first program is their Rescue Program with the primary purpose of controlling the population of feral cats while adopting out those that are deemed to be tame to households or suited to farms. This program is the bulk of their operations, and as a result, where a majority of expenses are placed. The trap-neuter-release portion of

the program in particular requires significant spending towards vet fees, and temporary care of the animals before they are released back to their colonies. The second program, which has admittedly been operating more so under the radar, is their “Owned Animal Assistance Program.” This initiative is geared towards helping low-income pet owners care for animals by spaying or neutering them, and at times assisting with other costs in order to prevent abandonment, euthanasia, or inhumane disposal of pets.

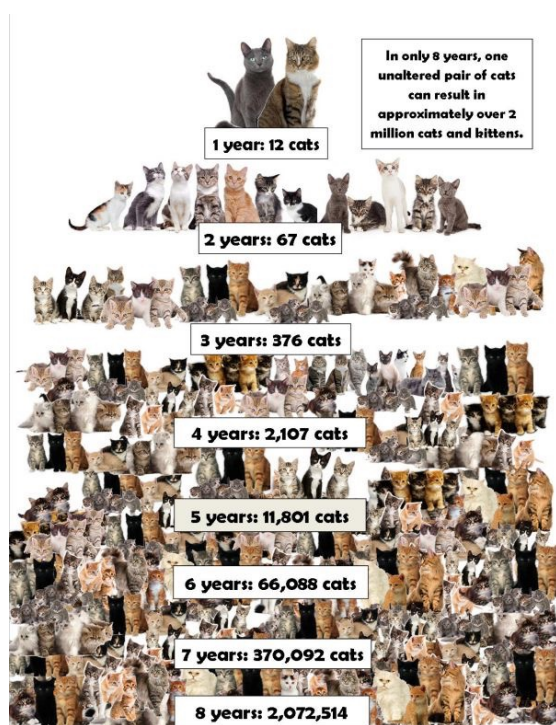


Figure 1 (Peoria SPCA) Chart demonstrating the potential population growth generated by a pair of intact cats.

The Importance of Small-Scale Humane Societies

Organizations such as the Okanagan Humane Society, are vital to animal welfare communities everywhere. They work in accessory to larger charities such as the BCSPCA. The BCSPCA has an essential role in the province. They are empowered

under the prevention of cruelty to animals act. This act allows the BCSPCA to prevent animal suffering as it occurs through their ability to carry out investigations, seizures of animals, and prosecute whenever necessary. Smaller-scale societies work toward the prevention of suffering through more preemptive methods. Namely, they avert suffering by preventing the animals from being born in the first place. It has been estimated that over the course of eight years, one pair of unfixed cats can be responsible for a chain of reproduction, creating more than two million cats (see *Figure 1* above). In addition to controlling the population, small scale humane societies adopt out rescued animals, raise awareness, and educate on the issues of animal welfare in their respective communities.

Purpose of this report

As a small-scale society, every ounce of support matters. This support can range from the time volunteered by community members, discounted services provided by veterinarians, and funds donated by loyal followers. However, none of this support is possible if the community doesn't know what the society does, why they do it, or how they do so. Since Ms. Runnalls took over as President of the society in May of 2018, OHS has redeveloped its website and social media pages, increased events linked to the charity, and spread their name through the news outlets. As a result, there has been an increase in the following of the Okanagan Humane Society in the previous two years. With that said, there is significant room for improvement. While social media numbers don't tell the whole story, especially given how new their Facebook page is, they have just under 3000 followers in a region of well over 360,000 people. This demonstrates how much room for growth there is for the Okanagan Humane Society's following. This

report will explore the efficient, cost-effective opportunities the Okanagan Humane Society can take to increase the awareness of their foundation and animal welfare.

The importance of The Report

The importance of this report is as significant as the small-scale humane societies themselves. This report explores awareness raising methods implemented by the Okanagan Humane Society for the purpose of developing their ability to raise their profile in the community they serve. Thereby enhancing the awareness of the important work they do for animals. Large scale animal charities such as the BCSPCA receive most of the recognition for their contributions to the animal welfare world due to their larger budget, increased media recognition, and governmental support. Making it vital that recognition is raised for the small-scale humane societies such as the Okanagan Humane Society who do not receive the same recognition but create significant impact in their communities. While, small scale charities do not have the authority to act in legal manners they are able to impact animal welfare in their community through, rescue, adoptions, fostering, and preventing feral and stray animals from continuing to reproduce. As such, it is critical for these small-scale humane societies to continue to grow and adapt for the purpose of continuing to make a difference in their community.

Scope and Data Sources

This report will be focused on researching cost effective forms of raising awareness that are not currently employed by the Okanagan Humane Society. In addition, methods of improving on currently employed techniques will also be explored. The data found in this report will be primarily derived from the Survey that took place on

the week of November 24th, 2019 - December 1st, 2019, as well as from an interview conducted with the President of the Okanagan Humane Society: Ms. Romany Runnalls. Supplemental data will be obtained through peer reviewed research articles, with non-peer reviewed articles providing a minimum but tertiary role in the data collecting process.

Data

Current Forms of Advertisement

Currently, the OHS is focused on social media, E-Newsletters, and community events for advertising and raising support. Ms. Runnalls admitted that Facebook has been a focal point for their social media pages, while Instagram has not underused to this point. Furthermore, in their development of the OHS Facebook page, there was a significant boost in following thanks in part to the takeover of the disassembled Okanagan Cat Coalition's Facebook page. In addition to social media pages, OHS has begun releasing a monthly E-Newsletter sent out to those who have subscribed. The release of this newsletter has been warmly welcomed by new and longstanding followers alike, thanks to more in-depth and consistent updates from the society. Finally, there has been an increase in events (fundraisers and adoption events) organized and run by volunteers, which has generated a healthy increase in followers. Ms. Runnalls stated, "We usually try to have at least one event per month, in addition, to approximately twenty pop up adoption events throughout the year." These events range from seasonal interactions such as pictures with Santa to more globally celebrated events such as appearances at Canada Day festivals.

Survey Data - Current Methods

An online survey was conducted for this report to obtain feedback on how well OHS is raising awareness, satisfaction of their content updates through social media and newsletters, and other feedback followers may want to see. The sample size of 48 respondents in this survey is relatively small. Nonetheless, useful feedback was obtained. Of the 48 participants, 41% heard about the Okanagan Humane Society through social media, while 33% (*Figure 2*) heard through word of mouth. Forty-nine percent of the respondents hear about Okanagan Humane Society more than once per week, while only 12.8% hear about OHS once or twice per year.

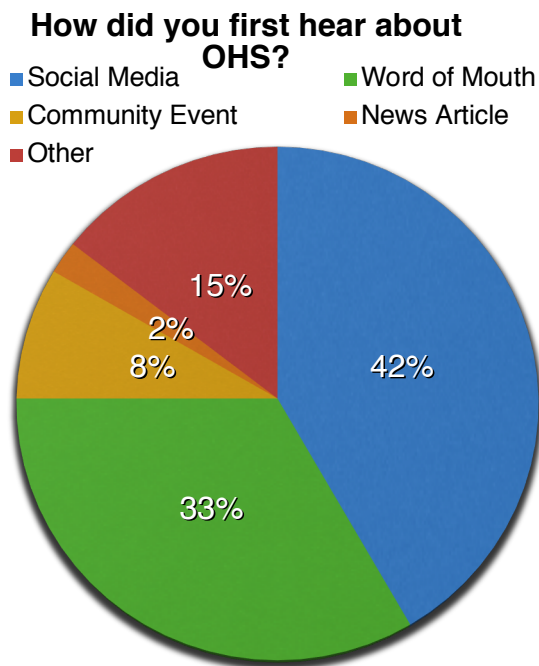


Figure 2 - How supporters heard about OHS

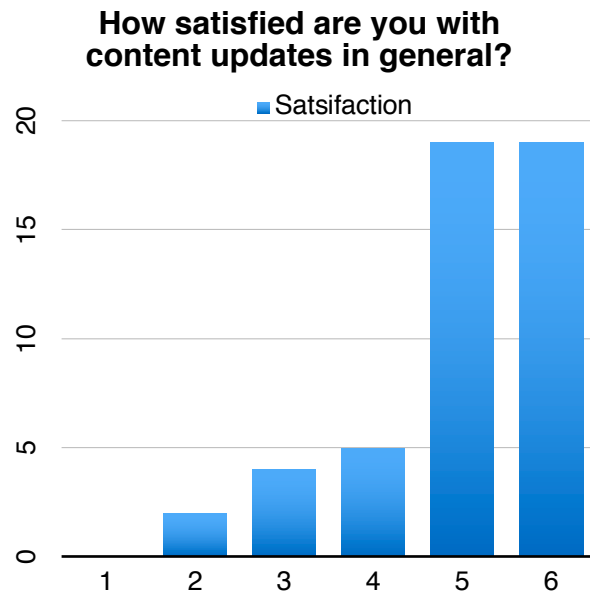


Figure 3 - Satisfaction of general content updates with 1 being not and 6 being very satisfied

Further questions were regarding the satisfaction of content updates. Nearly 81% of the respondents answered with either a 5 or 6 (out of 6, with 6 being most satisfied) on general content updates (*Figure 3*), while 75% answered a 5 or 6 (out of 6) on

satisfaction for social media updates (*Figure 4*). Finally, when asked about the monthly E-Newsletters, 43.8% answered that they are not currently receiving them (*Figure 5*).

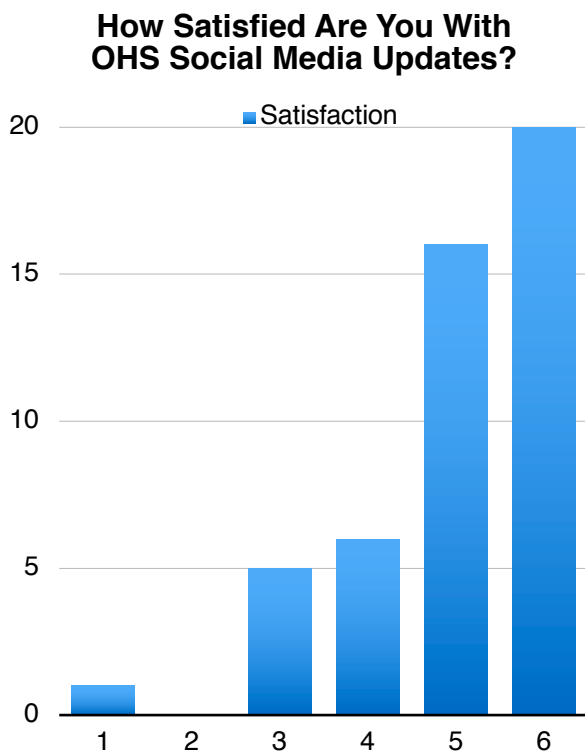


Figure 4- Satisfaction of content updates with 1 being not and 6 being very satisfied

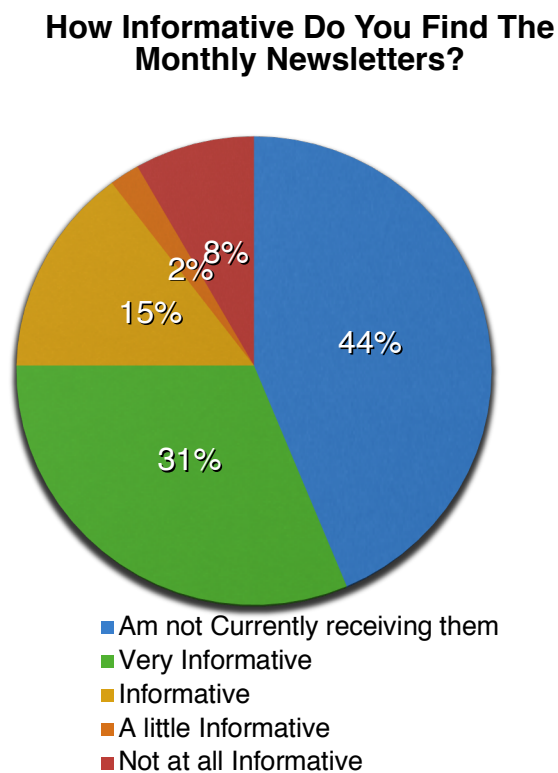


Figure 5- How informative monthly emails sent by OHS are with regards to various aspects of the organization.

Interpretation of data

The data from the survey has strong indications that the Okanagan Humane Society is getting through to its supporters over social media, and with a great deal of satisfaction. The general content updates through newsletters and social media are two of the strongest methods currently employed by OHS though there is some feedback from followers that will be discussed in the next section. The data also shows that of the respondents, just under half of them, are not yet receiving the monthly E-Newsletters.

While these numbers can undoubtedly be improved upon, the letters were implemented less than four months ago (September 2019), and are showing upward-trends in their subscriptions.

Survey Feedback

Perhaps the most beneficial portion of the survey was the feedback shared by respondents. Two particular questions that were asked revolved around feedback on methods employed to raising awareness and feedback on social media content. In response to the methods, it appears as though most respondents are quite happy with the methods that are already employed. One piece of feedback requested an education program for kids pertaining to the importance of keeping domesticated cats inside and how they can get involved in helping animals in the community. The second piece of feedback requested that events be labeled as wheelchair accessible, or not in order to accommodate everybody. Finally, there was a request that information for emergency response situations is provided.

From the social media standpoint, respondents were vocal in their desire for updates on animals. These desires include how certain animals are doing, before and after success stories, and updates on feral colonies (when appropriate). One respondent requested that information be presented with regards to how the Okanagan Humane Society helps dogs since the society is advertised to help a variety of pets. Finally, there was a strong indication by participants for further advertisement on how they can actively help the organization. Interest was expressed in different volunteering opportunities, ways they can help/support events, and items that foster animals may require.

Interview Findings

In the interview with Ms. Runnalls further information was revealed with regards to plans for raising awareness, and how far the organization has come since she became president. Upon Ms. Runnalls' election as President, she immediately went to work on revamping the website and improving the organization's use of social media. The next mission was to get OHS out and active in the community through increases in events supporting the society. When asked which single awareness-raising technique has made the most significant impact, Ms. Runnalls noted that articles published on Castanet (A local source of media in Kelowna) and Kelowna Now, led to considerable increases in social media, and website views within 48 hours. This media exposure, while significant, is few and far between as they hinge on news-worthy events or costly payments for such exposure (i.e., newspaper advertising), which OHS tends to avoid.

As for the future and what Ms. Runnalls would like to do next in her role as president, she has made it clear that it is a priority to increase focus on helping dogs in the community through OHS' Owned Animal Assistance Program. Coming into her role as president, the primary focus was establishing the Rescue Program to get the population of feral or homeless cats under control through trap-neuter-release, while helping adoptable pets find new homes. This program has been successful in areas of the community and will continue to be sustained, however, focuses can now be turned to assisting more pets, including dogs. An early partnership with "Woofers," another Okanagan based rescue society, has been formed and will develop further over the next couple of years. This partnership will allow for expansion of the Owned Animal

Assistance Program in various aspects, including who can be helped, in which communities, and how many pets can be assisted.

In Ms. Runnalls' closing remarks, she stressed that OHS "Is firing on all cylinders". There isn't a single area that has been less successful than the other during her time as president. The applications are flowing in from those who wish to help volunteer. Most tame cats being brought in, are being adopted out nearly as quickly, and the spay-neuter programs are ensuring population control feral colonies alike.

Literature Review

Thanks to its cost effective and easy to access nature, social media is without question one of the most powerful tools in advertising and awareness raising. One article suggests that in order to optimize social media, a few basics need to be implemented. The first is deciding which social media platforms are going to be used and using them effectively (Jackson, 2019). In this context, "effectively" is described as consistent upkeep, and is capable of follower interaction that keeps them interested. One study on social media found that different platforms were more beneficial than others in appealing to various dimensions. For example, Facebook obtained the highest ratings on social interaction and topicality as it allowed instant sharing of information, quick correspondence, and staying informed on all the information. (Voorveld et al., 2018) In the same study, Twitter was found to be effective in sharing information quickly, while Instagram was most impactful in the dimensions of topicality, those looking to pass the time, and obtain information quickly. (Voorveld et al., 2018)

Outside of social media specifics, it has been suggested that to increase brand awareness, there are the "Three E's" of awareness-raising. Ryan Erskine indicates that

in order to build a brand, one must Educate, Entertain, and provide “wow-experiences” (Erskine, 2016). Educate the followers on what this brand (or charity) is doing and why. In fact, countless studies have demonstrated the positive impact education has on subsequent behaviour. Examples such as Bosshardt, Kipps, and England (2017) showing that education on post-concussion behaviour, resulted in improved behaviour in situations of risk while Wang et al. (2018) demonstrated how educating students on health concerns led to increased understanding and preventative measures towards infectious diseases. The comparison of concussions and disease to the methods of raising awareness for a charity is a comparison of oranges to apples. Nevertheless, the important take away from these studies is the apparent correlations between education on a matter and behaviours in support of such education.

Proposed Recommendations

Implementations

Options to consider for implementation are as follows:

- A blog
- An education program
- Increased awareness for dogs in the program

Blog Implementation:

Thanks in part to the desire expressed by respondents of the survey for updates on animals, as well as positive success stories, the implementation of a blog on the OHS website or hyperlinked from the website would satisfy this need. When asked

about a blog post in the interview, Ms. Runnalls eluded to having already given it some thought. However, two primary concerns of hers led to the decision to avoid a blog for the time being. The first concern was that the positive success stories from OHS are very similar in nature from one to the next. There are thousands of animals they have helped, yet most of the time, a blog would end up sounding like a broken record after a while. The second concern is the lack of volunteers with the capability to maintain the blog.

OHS should implement a blog for the positivity it creates, and the positivity it can spread. Media of all sorts is packed with negativity. Whether it is related to animals or not, negative stories tend to dominate news headlines. With the addition of a blog that posts on a weekly, or biweekly basis, a sense of positivity is generated that can be shared through social media to others. There is great potential for these positive stories to reach a greater audience, thereby raising further awareness, through the ability to like and share posts on social media platforms.

Education Program:

As touched on earlier, education drives behaviour. The education program does not need to be extensive, nor does it need to be complicated. In fact, the more straightforward it is, the more audiences it can reach. A program in which children and adults alike can learn the basics of programs such as trap-neuter-release, how the animals are treated, and why it is important, can create an extensive branching out of knowledge to others. Now, this program would be slightly more time consuming; as such, there are different forms of education. This education can be run through monthly

newsletters to reach more of the audience at once, or semi-annual gatherings that are heavily advertised months in advance for in-person experiences.

Increased awareness of dogs

The benefit of being a charity that helps both cats, and dogs, is the ability to appeal to a more broad audience. As it stands right now, there is likely to be more of a “cat person” following for the Okanagan Humane Society as the previous twenty-two years have been geared primarily towards cats. As OHS begins to grow its ability to support dogs, their ability to appeal to this audience grows, which naturally should increase the awareness and support for the charity.

Modifications

In addition to implementations that would increase the awareness of the Okanagan Humane Society, there are several modifications to the current methods that could produce an increase in awareness.

- Increased use of Instagram
- Seasonal promotions

Increased use of Instagram

Members of social media are no strangers to searching for pictures of cats and dogs. Videos of pets performing acts that entertain us, enamour us or have us sympathizing with an emotional story, fill social media feeds daily. The potential growth in awareness that is created for the Okanagan Humane Society by posting more pictures may be the simplest implementation in the report. Furthermore, regularly scheduled posts on both Instagram and Facebook with regards to adoptable animals in

OHS' care, provides opportunities beyond growth. These opportunities include demonstrations on specific techniques to caring for animals with disease or injury, as well as fulfilling the desire that has been expressed for updates on the animals.

Seasonal Promotions

Advertising to the season is far from a discovery. In fact, the Okanagan Humane Society has participated in seasonal promotions for their adoptable cats in the past when they advertised their "Lover Boys" for February, and more specifically, Valentine's Day. An increase in seasonal promotions such as this, is a fun, engaging way to attract the attention to adoptable cats, and more specifically, those that may be struggling to find their forever home. Ideas along the lines of the 12 cats of Christmas or the Freaky Felines of Halloween are festive ideas that get adopters both into a holiday mood and help find their companion.

Conclusion

Recommendations for Implementation

A strong plan of attack for these recommendations will be to first build around social media and blog. First, the continued modification of Instagram and keeping it up to date will generate more interest from a wider range of people. While creating a blog will allow for more in-depth looks at the work OHS does day in and day out to help animals. Once these two implementations have begun to take place, there should be a slight shift in focus directed towards the education and pet assistance program. The planning and development stage of these programs will co-exist nicely with the continued development of social media. Ideally, once these programs are beginning to

be carried out, the social media pages have been built up significantly more to where they can be used to advertise or share success stories.

Implementations of seasonal promotions should be done as the Society sees fit based on seasons.

Summary

There is a significant upside to these recommendations as the blog, social media updates, and seasonal promotions are quick, easy implementations that can instantly gain traction without too much extra effort. The blog may take the most time out of these three to gain a following as it is beginning from the ground up. However, it is feasible to assume that as awareness increases through social media, those same social media pages can be used as a platform to advertise the blog. The education program and dog assistance programs will take significantly more time to create and refine, however they possess the potential to make the greatest long term impact out of the five recommendations.

In summary, the Okanagan Humane is without question trending upwards in their awareness-raising throughout the Okanagan region. As time progresses, the main focuses of the society for raising awareness should involve education programs, and increasing focus on helping dogs. It is recommended that in the short term, upgrades are needed for social media pages. For the long term, developing education styles that are simple, cost-effective, and reach a greater population will be helpful for raising awareness. Greater focus on dogs will create a natural increase in interest by a broader audience over time.

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Appendix 1 Interview Questions

My name is Connor Runnalls, I am an undergrad student at UBC, conducting this interview with OHS for the purpose of research new possible awareness raising ideas for small scale animal charities. The report will be addressed to the President of OHS, Ms. Romany Runnalls There will be 10 questions for Romany, which will likely take 20-30 minutes of time.

- 1) What drove you to be the president of OHS?
- 2) What advertisement/awareness raising techniques are you currently implementing with OHS?
- 3) Are there any areas that you are currently exploring?
- 4) What have you found is the most effective method to date?
- 5) Has there been any feedback from volunteers/donors regarding awareness methods?
- 6) How many events does OHS generally have per year, and which ones?
- 7) What is your general mantra when submitting information through social media, the OHS website, and quarterly newsletters? What are your focal points?
- 8) Do you run any seasonal advertisements?
- 9) Do you find that OHS is being more so called upon for adoptions, volunteer opportunities, or TNR programs?
- 10) How does OHS go about helping dogs? Based on the website there is mostly information with regards to cats/kittens, and not so much dog focused.

Appendix 2 - Survey Questions

Hello followers of Okanagan Humane Society, I am an undergraduate student at UBC who has created the survey below that is designed to provide feedback for a research project in ways to increase awareness of the organization. In addition to the survey, online research and an interview with the President of OHS will be taken in as primary data. The final report will be addressed to Ms. Romany Runnalls. If at any point you would like to contact Ms. Runnalls with questions or concerns regarding this survey or other general questions, she can be reached at president@okanaganhumanesociety.com. The purpose of this report will be to outline proposed recommendations for increasing awareness of OHS in the Okanagan community. The survey consists of 10 questions total, and should only take between 5-10 minutes of your time. To ensure autonomy, this survey is 100% voluntary, and your responses will be completely anonymous. If at any point you feel you do not wish to continue with the survey, you may exit out of the screen without submission. For all other information with regards to the Okanagan Humane Society, visit <https://okanaganhumanesociety.com/>. Your participation and responses are greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time.

When did you first hear about OHS?

15+ years ago

10-15 years ago

5-10 years ago

1-5 years ago

How satisfied are you with content updates in general?

On a scale of 1-6 (1 being not satisfied, 6 being very satisfied)

How familiar are you with the Okanagan Humane Society's Trap - Neuter - Release process?

On a scale of 1-6 (1 being unfamiliar, 6 being very familiar)

How did you first hear about OHS?

Social Media

News Article

Friend/Word of mouth

Community event

Other

How frequently do you hear about OHS?

More than once per week

Once per week

1-2x per month

1-2x per year

How content are you with OHS' social media updates?

On a scale of 1-6 (1 being not content, 6 being very content)

Is there anything you would like to see more of on the Social Media pages?

Open answer

How informative do you find the monthly e-newsletters?

Not at all informative

A little Informative

Informative

Very Informative

Am not currently receiving them

Are there any changes you would like to see from the newsletters?

Open Answer

How often do you support events linked to OHS?

On a scale of 1-6 (1 being never, 6 being all of them)

Do you have any other feedback in the manner of how you heard about OHS, or their methods of keeping you informed?

Open Answer

Thank you for your participation