

You Can Do It:

A Step-by-Step Guide to Campaigning

Once you have completed a sample inspection form and collected sufficient documentation to help you outline problems and then set your goals, you are ready to organize your campaign. A campaign is a long-term plan of action focused on one particular issue, involving setting an ambitious yet achievable goal, planning escalating levels of action, and sticking with it until you win. Here are some planning tips:

■ **Define your goal(s).** Would you like structural improvements to an inadequate facility? If the shelter gasses animals, do you want them to contract with a veterinarian to perform euthanasia? Do you want different hours of operation? What about a change in how they clean and handle the animals?

■ **Do your homework.** Find out if any state agency oversees your local shelters and if there are mandated shelter standards. If so, you are probably entitled to get inspection reports in writing from that agency to find out the history of problems at the shelter, whether or not it has been inspected lately. You can also obtain a copy of the standards to which it must adhere in order to see if your shelter is failing to comply. Even if there is no state oversight, it is important to look up your state anti-cruelty statutes (a good Internet resource is www.romingerlegal.com/state/html) and local ordinances about animals. All these laws can easily be looked up at your local library. Laws have to be written so that nonlawyers can understand them, so don't be intimidated. If you think your shelter or the actions of employees at the shelter are in violation of state or local laws, include this information in your letter to, or meeting with, officials (and notify law enforcement). Obtain information about the shelter's practices and policies by volunteering on a regular basis.

■ **Enlist support.** While it's possible to campaign alone, the support of others is always helpful. It's important to establish an identity as a group. Decide as a group whose

support you really need to win; don't just say "the public." Which groups or individuals in particular? Consider how to reach them. Whose support can you count on from the beginning? Try to get support from politicians and from other groups, such as civic associations, the League of Women Voters, and Rotary clubs. Approach veterinarians or anyone else who has the experience and credentials to be considered an expert on the issue. Inform them of the situation and ask them to give you a written statement in support of your goal, lending credibility to your campaign and making it easier to convince both the public and government officials. Circulate a petition, demonstrating to your local lawmakers that voting for a proposed ordinance, for example, will win them support from the community.

■ **Begin by writing to the appropriate officials—** or, better by far, making an appointment to speak with them directly—explaining what the problems are at the shelter and asking for specific changes to be made. Show them your documentation. In the case of municipal shelters, usually city or county commissioners are ultimately responsible for shelter operation. For private humane societies, there is usually a board of directors that oversees the operation. Sometimes private shelters have contracts with the city or county to take in animals, in which case both the board and the elected officials are jointly responsible. Copies of photographs as well as a petition may be enclosed with your letters or brought to the meeting to make an impact. Always keep copies of everything you send and keep dated notes from every meeting.

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■ **Organize protests, if necessary, and/or pitch your campaign to a local newspaper or TV reporter.** After giving officials time to respond to your requests, you may decide that a demonstration, march, or rally will give your cause the exposure it needs to grab the public's attention to lend support to your cause. Or you may organize a letter-writing campaign and a sustained public education effort of tabling, leafleting, and public meetings. Perhaps your goal involves lobbying for the creation of a new law that would affect animals at the shelter. If so, please see the enclosed factsheet on lobbying for helpful information.

Whatever your strategy, produce some basic campaign literature to bring to your events: a factsheet, a background/history sheet, a page of expert opinions, pictures or a video, and a short leaflet that lists your goals and tells people what they can do to help. These provide essential information for the public and the media. (PETA has factsheets and leaflets available that you can use as references.) Remember, it is important to try to get media coverage for every action. For help, please see the enclosed sample news release.

■ **Don't give up!** See your campaign through to the end, for the animals' sake. You can achieve miracles for them if you stick with it. We promise!