



## **New Health Research Will Improve Life and Health for Cats Waiting to be Adopted— June Is Adopt-a-Cat Month**

*Anonymous Cat Lover Will Match Donations to Morris Animal Foundation's Helping Shelters Help Cats Initiative Dollar for Dollar up to \$500,000*

**Denver, May 14, 2009**—Millions of homeless cats lose their lives in shelters each year—often due to common yet treatable illnesses. In a survey conducted by Morris Animal Foundation (MAF), experts identified upper respiratory disease, diarrhea and ringworm as the top health issues for shelter cats. To address these issues, MAF's new Helping Shelters Help Cats program is funding three [feline health research](#) studies aimed at reducing stress and increasing adoption rates. News of the three grants and the shelter program coincides with the promotion of Adopt-a-Cat Month in June. Learn more about upper respiratory disease and support MAF's shelter cat research at [www.research4cats.org](http://www.research4cats.org).

[Helping Shelters Help Cats](#) is part of MAF's [Happy Healthy Cat Campaign](#), an unprecedented effort to raise pet-owner awareness of feline health issues and increase funding for feline health research and scientist training. The following research studies are the first to receive campaign support. This funding is made possible through an anonymous challenge gift in which the donor will match every dollar given to this program up to \$500,000, for a potential total of \$1 million.

Ranked as the No. 1 concern for shelter cats, [upper respiratory infection](#) (URI)—a highly contagious virus—can be a death sentence to shelter cats because organizations lack the resources to prevent its spread or to care for sick cats. Even with treatment, affected cats may have recurrent URI outbreaks when stressed.

In the first study, Dr. Kate Hurley, director of the Koret Shelter Medicine Program at the University of California–Davis, will receive MAF funding to study risk factors that increase URI outbreaks in shelters and to develop practical, cost-effective recommendations to improve shelter cat health and comfort.

An international team from the United States, Canada and Australia is spearheading the second study to receive funding. The researchers will analyze shelter conditions that cause emotional stress and plan to develop effective behavioral interventions to minimize the spread of URI in cats.

The third study will be conducted at the Ohio State University, where a team of veterinary scientists will identify ways to increase the safety and comfort of the surroundings, which should improve overall health and reduce the time from admission to adoption. The researchers will use the results of their research to create a training program to reduce stress in shelter cats through cage and environmental enhancements.

The anonymous donor dedicated this gift in honor of all the veterinarians and veterinary staff; directors and operations and administrative staff; and volunteers who commit their time and skills to humane societies, animal shelters and rescue organizations. To improve the health and well-being of shelter cats, donate at [www.research4cats.org](http://www.research4cats.org).

**About Morris Animal Foundation:** Morris Animal Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit established in 1948, is dedicated to funding [animal health research](#) that protects, treats and cures companion animals, horses and wildlife. MAF has been at the forefront of funding breakthrough research studies benefiting animals on all seven continents. MAF has its headquarters in Denver. [Charity Navigator](#) ranks MAF as a four-star charity, the highest rating. MAF is a [BBB Wise Giving Alliance](#) Charity Seal Holder. For more information, call 800.243.2345 or visit [MorrisAnimalFoundation.org](http://MorrisAnimalFoundation.org).