



# WINN FELINE FOUNDATION

For the Health and Well-being of All Cats

390 Amwell Road, Suite 402, Hillsborough, NJ 08844  
908-359-1184 • Fax 908-359-7619 • [www.winnfelinehealth.org](http://www.winnfelinehealth.org)

## **Expansion of the Shelter Population Index for Cats: a Multi-Institutional Study**

**Investigator: John C. New Jr., DVM, MPH, DACVPM**

University of Tennessee

*Grant MT06-001*

In Phase 1 of this multi-institutional study, a Shelter Population Index (SPI) was developed to estimate the numbers of cats entering and leaving selected shelters. It also includes the origin of the cats and their destinations upon leaving the shelter. The SPI was designed to measure the overall dynamics of shelter feline populations on a regional and national basis. Indirectly, the SPI evaluates the support and involvement of the communities to their shelters. By using Combined Statistical Areas (CSAs) as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, the SPI is linked directly to these communities. The SPI can then be used as a benchmark by communities to justify the need for improvement in community-based programs to control the surplus of cats in their communities. Repeating data collections would identify trends associated with shelter cat populations and community-based solutions.

In Phase 2 of this study, data collected represents shelters serving 50% of the U.S. population. Based on the change in SPI from 2007-2008, communities in New England appear to be losing ground in their ability to deal with the cat surplus. Communities in the Middle Atlantic and Mountain States appear to be making progress. Communities in the rest of the country appear to be holding their own regarding their ability to deal with the cat surplus. The severe economic downturn in the U.S. will likely play a significant role as shelters struggle with the problem of surplus cats in their communities. The SPI is a useful tool to evaluate the general awareness and involvement of the community that supports the feline sheltering system.

*Summary prepared by William Folger, DVM, DABVP (Feline Practice)*

*©2009*