

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but WORDS will truly kill me.

“Hate speech” doesn’t just have human victims – it has canine and feline victims, too.

"Dogs are notorious for hope...Every morning, in dog pounds all over America, hundreds of dogs awake to their last day with gladness in their hearts." – Unknown

Every day, millions of animals in shelters nationwide wait and hope that today will be the day that they’re taken from captivity and placed into a loving home. They hope that today they won’t be taken on the long walk from which dogs and cats don’t return – and they hope that they’ll finally know what it feels like to be unconditionally loved.

These animals know that they’re frightened, insecure, and unhappy behind bars – but what they don’t know is how important their written biographies are.

When lives are on the line, every word counts – and what you say is just as important as what you omit.

Prospective adopters who are searching online for a dog or cat to adopt will probably overlook an animal whose biography lists them as “aggressive,” “destructive,” “mouthy,” or suffering from “severe separation anxiety.” Sometimes, these labels dissuade potential families from taking in an animal who’s desperate to be loved.

Over time, one or two seemingly benign words can make the difference between life and death. Animals whose biographies are uninteresting, incomplete, or negative will be continuously passed over – and eventually, they’ll run out of time. Those who write the biographies of adoptable animals need to be careful with their language and give animals the best possible chance of making it out of the shelter alive.

Examining the context behind an exhibited behavior can provide more information for potential adopters – and encourage them to give an animal a chance. It shouldn’t be a surprise if a young dog is “mouthy” or a dog who was abandoned in a home exhibits “separation anxiety.”

Providing a positive, thorough biography for an animal – and providing the context behind “unsavory” behaviors or suites of behaviors – can make the difference between being killed or making it out of the shelter alive.

Sticks and stones can break our bones, but hate speech is what can truly kill animals.