

# Perceptions of Wildlife Rehabilitation



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## **Purpose:**

Does terminology and image presentation affect peoples opinions of an animal's status: Pet, Education, or Releasable animal?



Photo: Karen Tannenbaum



A silhouette of a bird, possibly a crow or raven, is perched on a ledge inside a cage. The cage is represented by vertical bars and a curved top. The background is a light yellow color with a wavy pattern.

## **Survey:**

### **Participants were asked...**

“Considering the following questions and images, please answer to the best of your ability, based on the information given to help us understand what the Perceptions of Wildlife Rehabilitation are...”

A decorative header featuring a silhouette of a bird, possibly a crow or raven, perched on a ledge. The background consists of vertical bars, suggesting a cage or enclosure. The color palette is primarily yellow and grey.

# Survey:

## Questions asked:

- Purpose of wildlife rehabilitation
- Role in wildlife rehabilitation
- Prerequisites for becoming a wildlife rehabilitator
- Location
- Animal status based on statements
- Animal status based on images

A decorative header featuring a silhouette of a bird, possibly a crow or raven, perched on a ledge. The background consists of vertical bars, suggesting a cage or enclosure. The color palette is primarily yellow and grey.

# Survey:

610 responses

- 165 public (not involved in wildlife rehabilitation)
- 145 volunteers (rehabilitating, rescuing, transporting)
- 168 rehabilitators (employed, home, non/permitted)
- 132 paid animal care professional (vets, agents, zoo, etc)



## Statements:

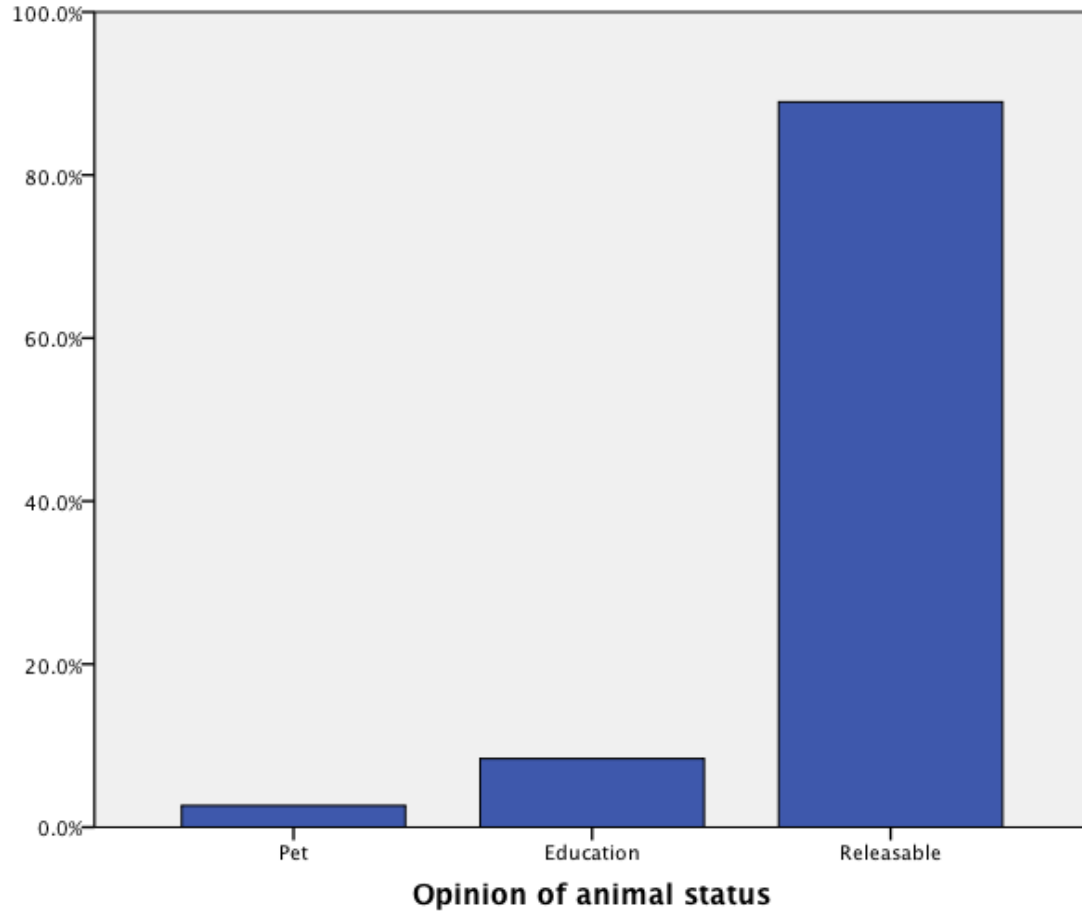
Consider the following statements (not the species) and determine which category you think the animal fits best in based on what you read:

Pet, Education Animal, Releasable Wild Animal

# The Eastern Cottontail has just opened her eyes.

Name: Technical  
Info: Common

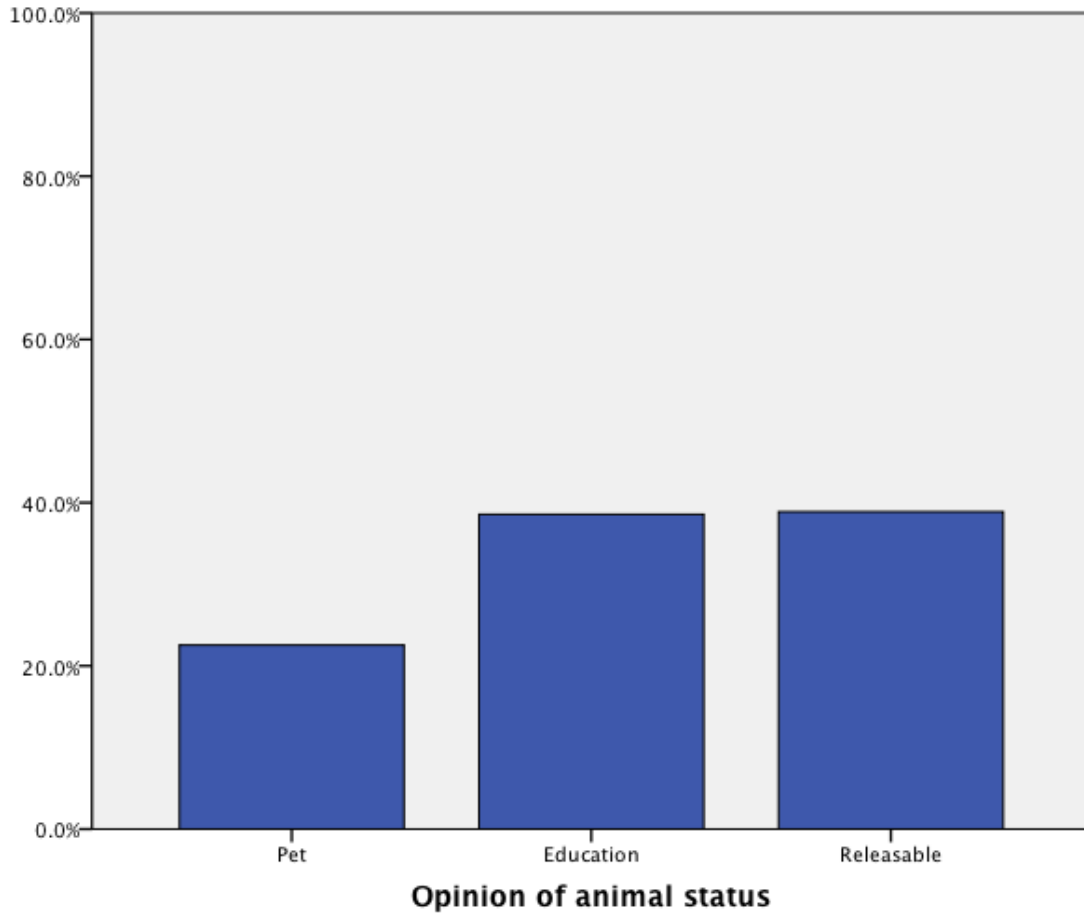
607 responses



# “Edgar Allen” crow is feeling icky.

Name: Anthropomorphic  
Info: Anthropomorphic

594 responses

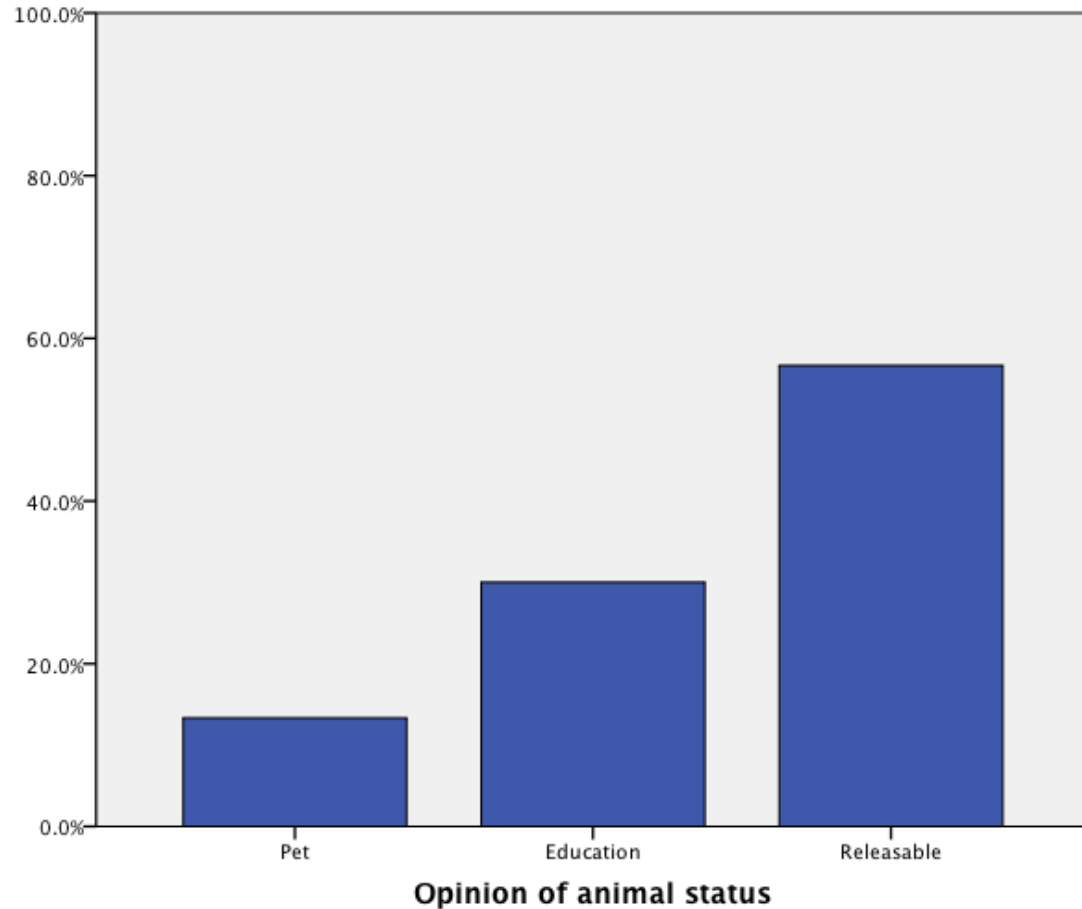




# The whistle pig is out of torpor and ataxic.

Name: Common  
Info: Technical

570 responses

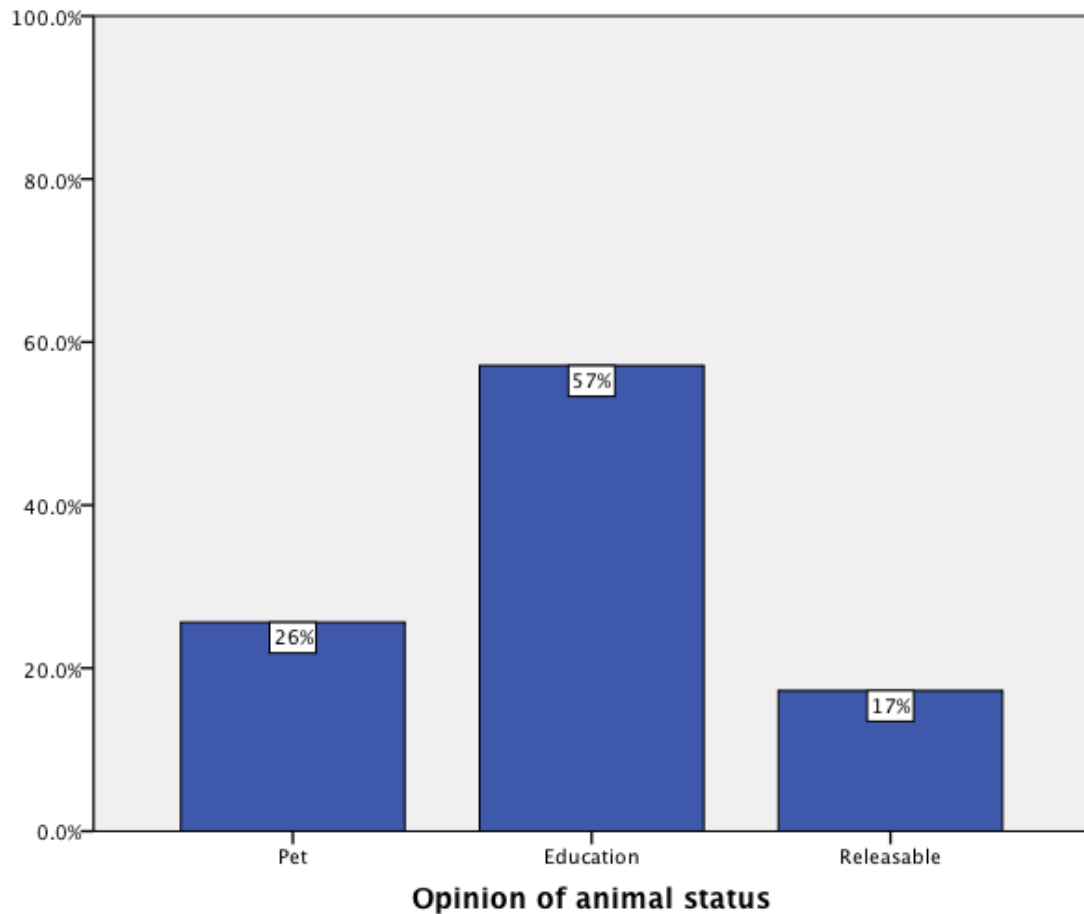


# “Bandit” can’t see out of his right eye.

Name: Anthropomorphic

Info: Common

597 responses

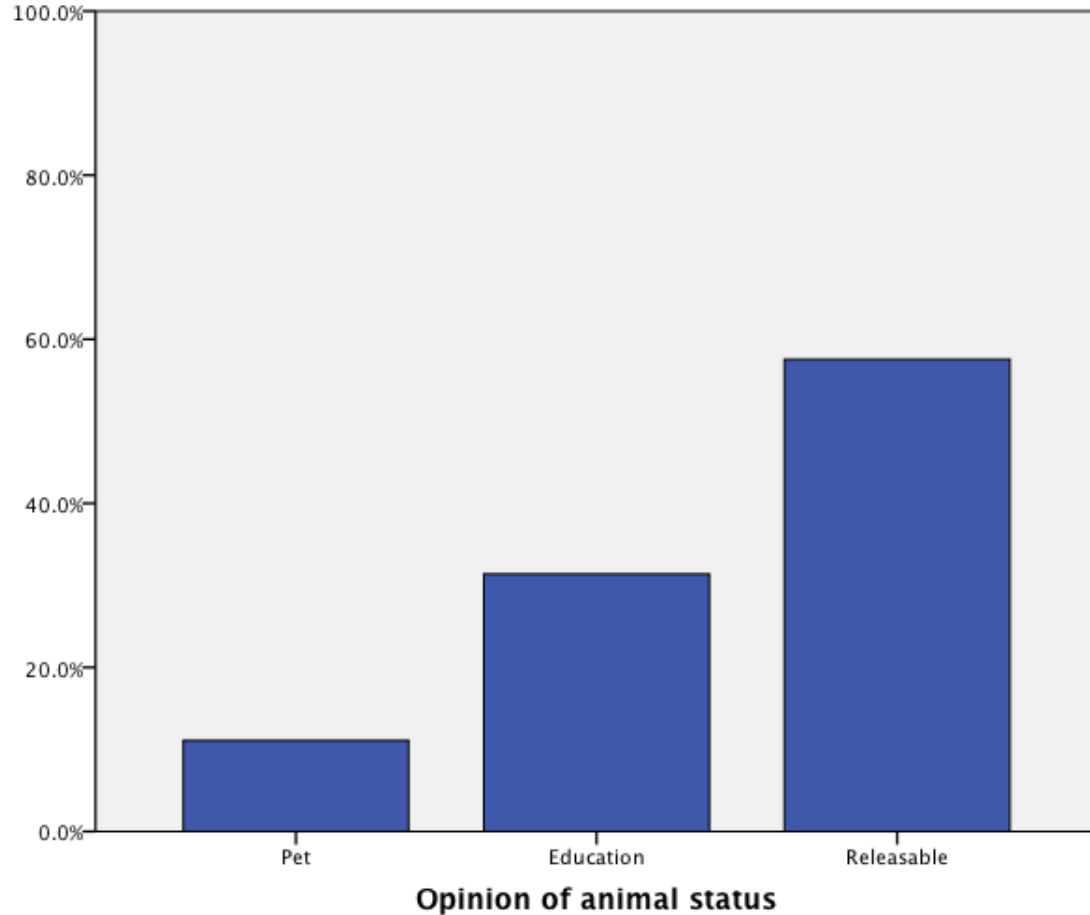


# The 'possum is being very playful today.

Name: Common

Info: Common

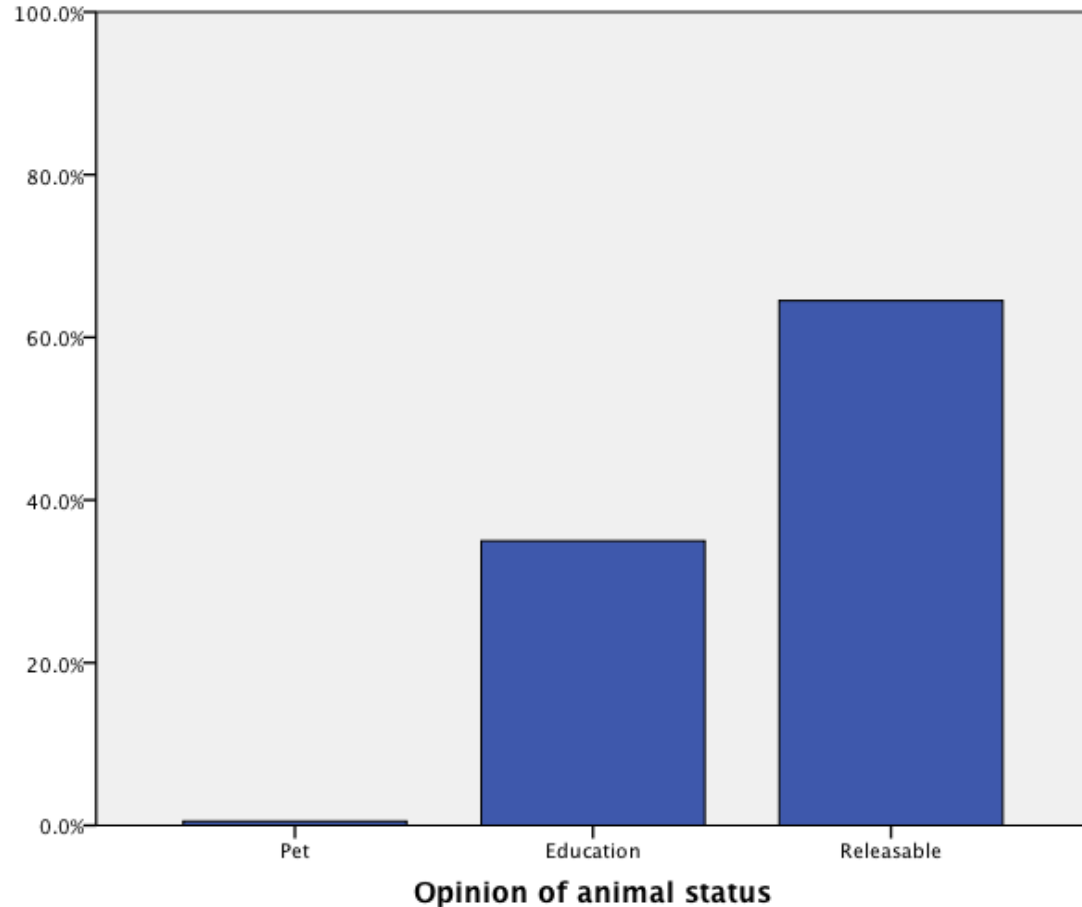
596 responses



# The Northern Cardinal has a fractured right humerus.

Name: Technical  
Info: Technical

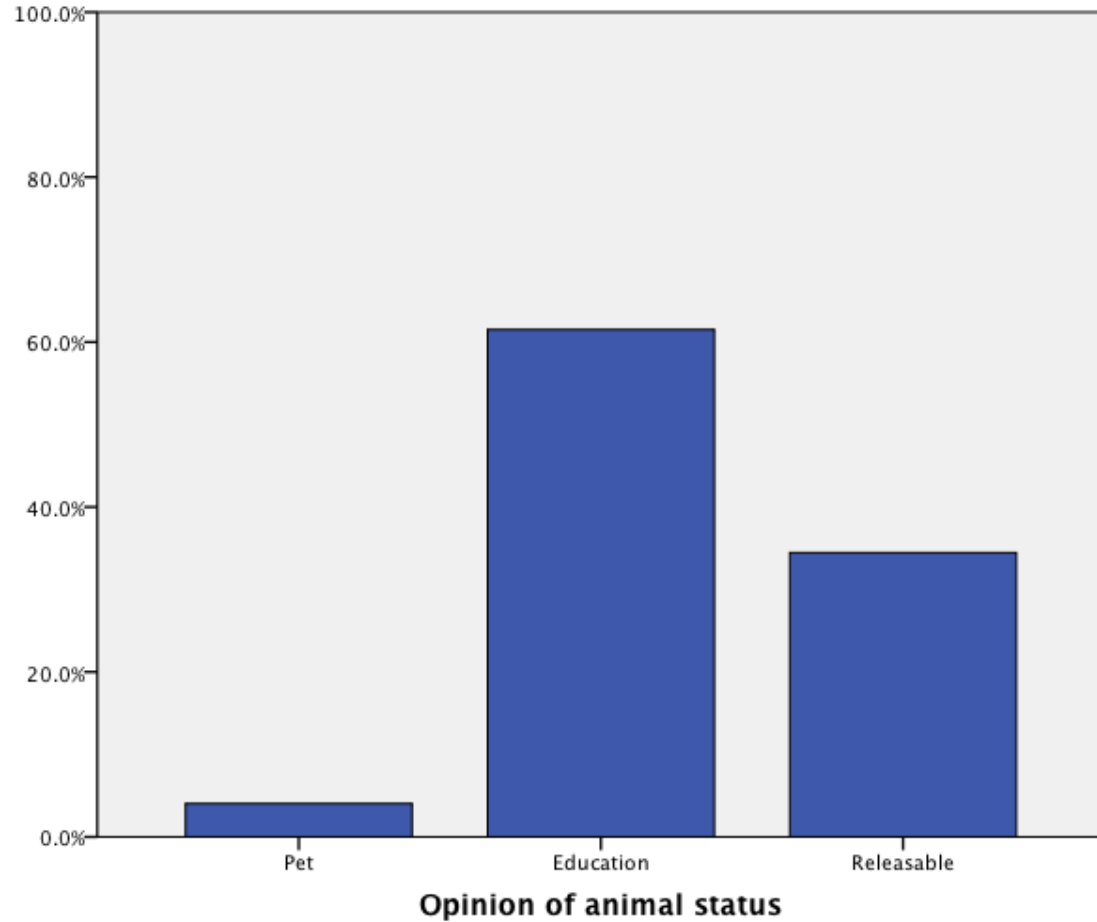
586 responses



# “Seymore” squirrel has right retinal scarring.

Name: Anthropomorphic  
Info: Technical

595 responses

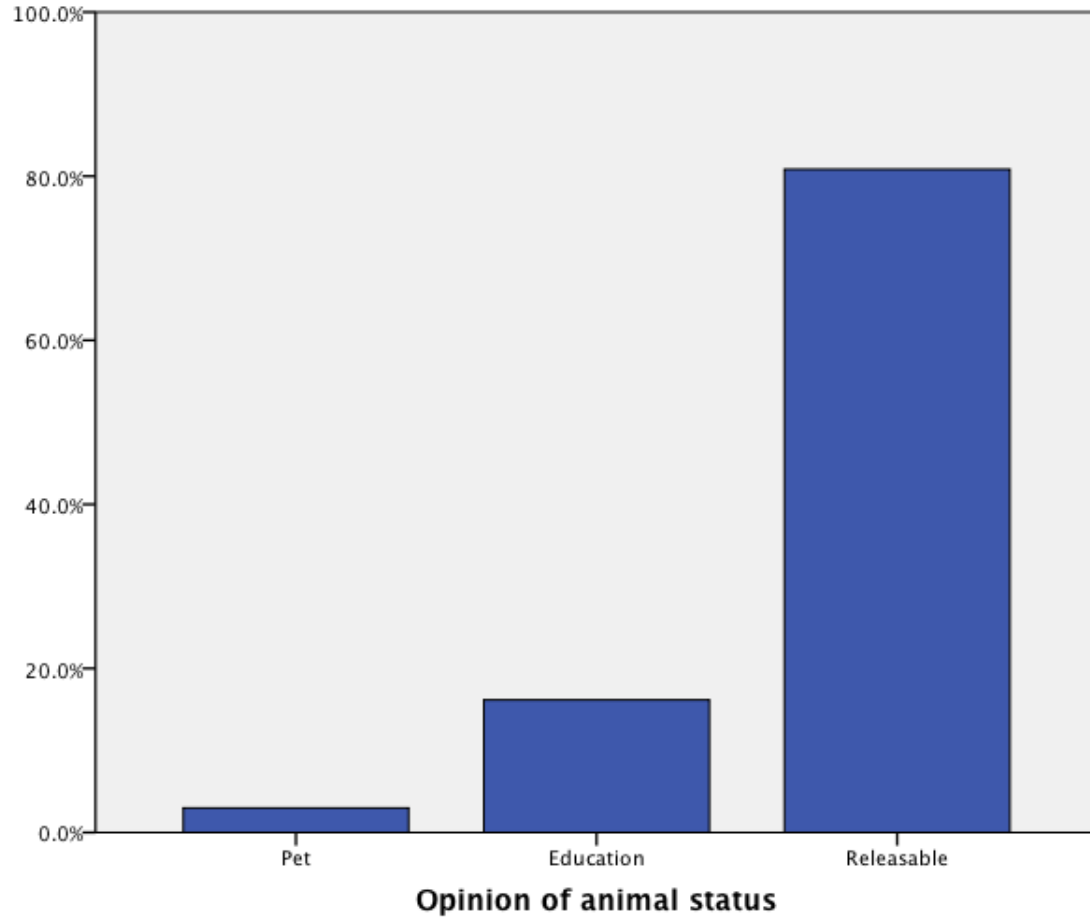


# The Buzzard eats dead mice, yummy.

Name: Common

Info: Anthropomorphic

600 responses

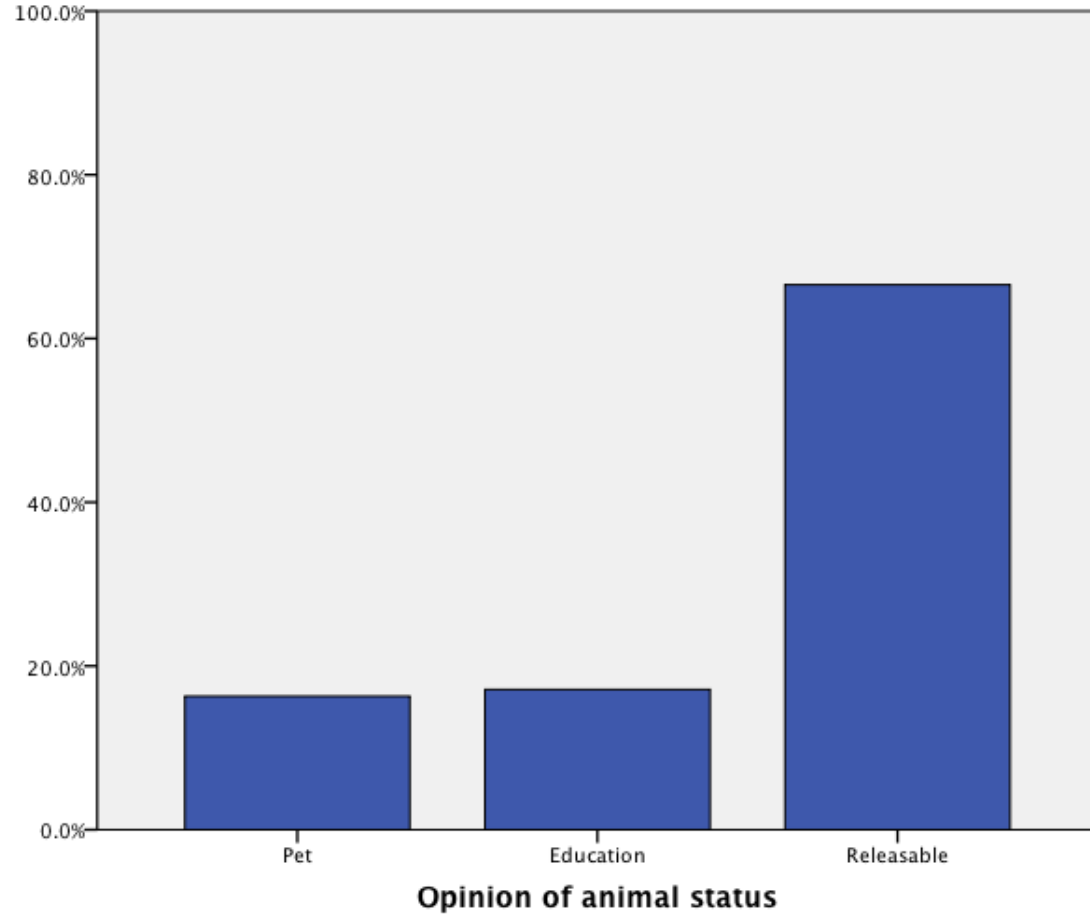


# The Raccoon is happy, he's smiling.

Name: Technical

Info: Anthropomorphic

595 responses





## Images:

Consider the following images (not the species) and determine which category you think the animal fits best in based on what you read:

Pet, Education Animal, Releasable Wild Animal





606 responses

- 2% (14) Pet
- 4% (25) Education Animal
- 94% (567) Releasable Wild Animal



601 responses

- 63% (382) Pet
- 17% (105)  
Education Animal
- 19% (114) Releasable  
Wild Animal



603 responses

- 2% (14) Pet
- 83% (499)  
Education Animal
- 15% (90) Releasable  
Wild Animal



600 responses

- 56% (338) Pet
- 11% (66)  
Education Animal
- 33% (196) Releasable  
Wild Animal





599 responses

- 21% (127) Pet
- 14% (82)  
Education Animal
- 65% (390) Releasable  
Wild Animal



601 responses

- 21% (124) Pet
- 20% (120)  
Education Animal
- 59% (357) Releasable  
Wild Animal

<http://hsbgbg.net>



601 responses

- 54% (322) Pet
- 32% (190)  
Education Animal
- 15% (89) Releasable  
Wild Animal



602 responses

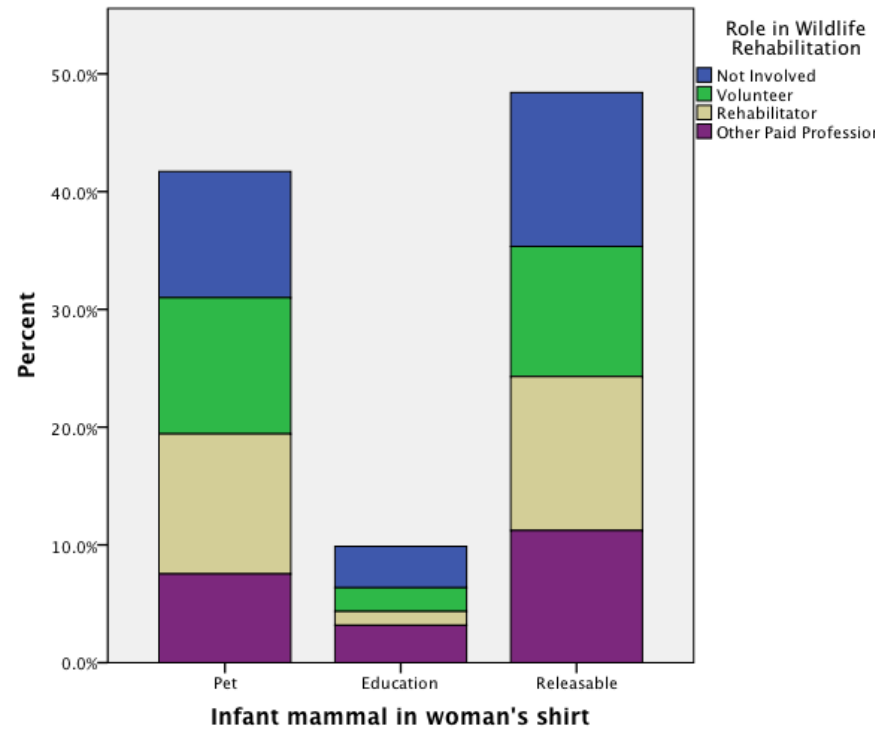
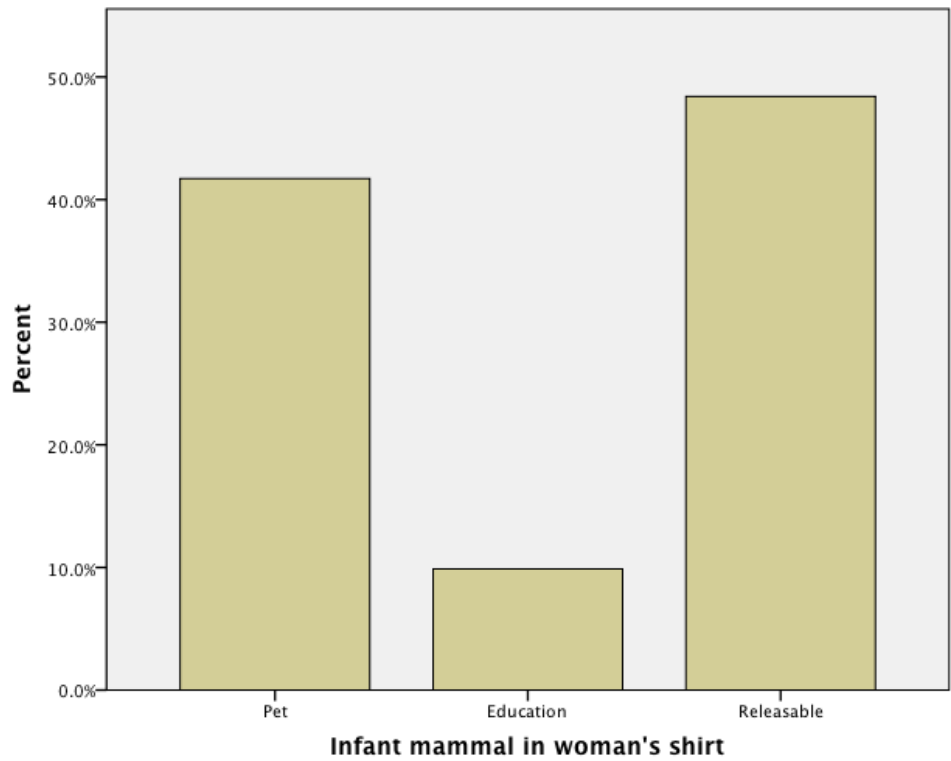
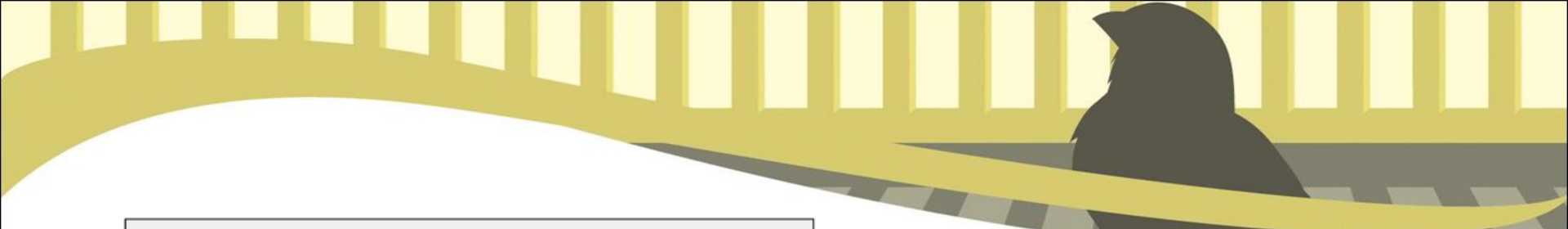
- 4% (22) Pet
- 11% (66)  
Education Animal
- 85% (514) Releasable  
Wild Animal





597 responses

- 42% (249) Pet
- 10% (59)  
Education Animal
- 49% (289) Releasable  
Wild Animal



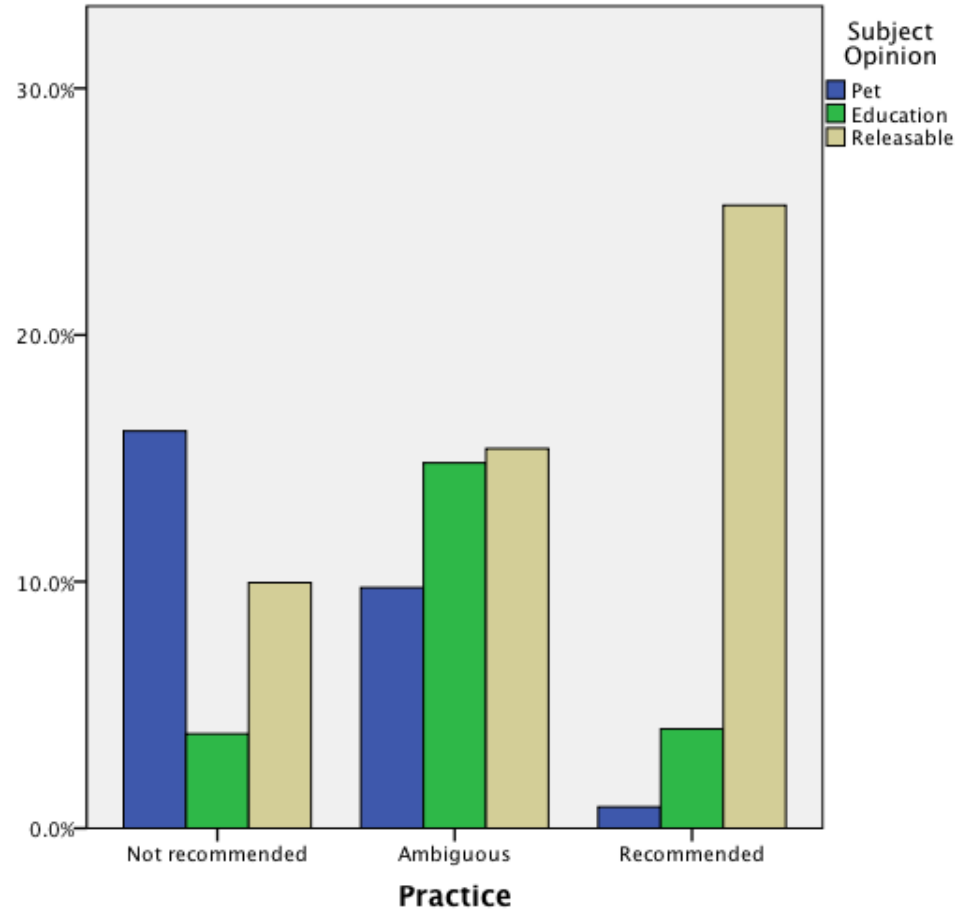


605 responses

- 3% (16) Pet
- 25% (151) Education Animal
- 72% (438) Releasable Wild Animal

# Opinion of Animal Status: Practice Type

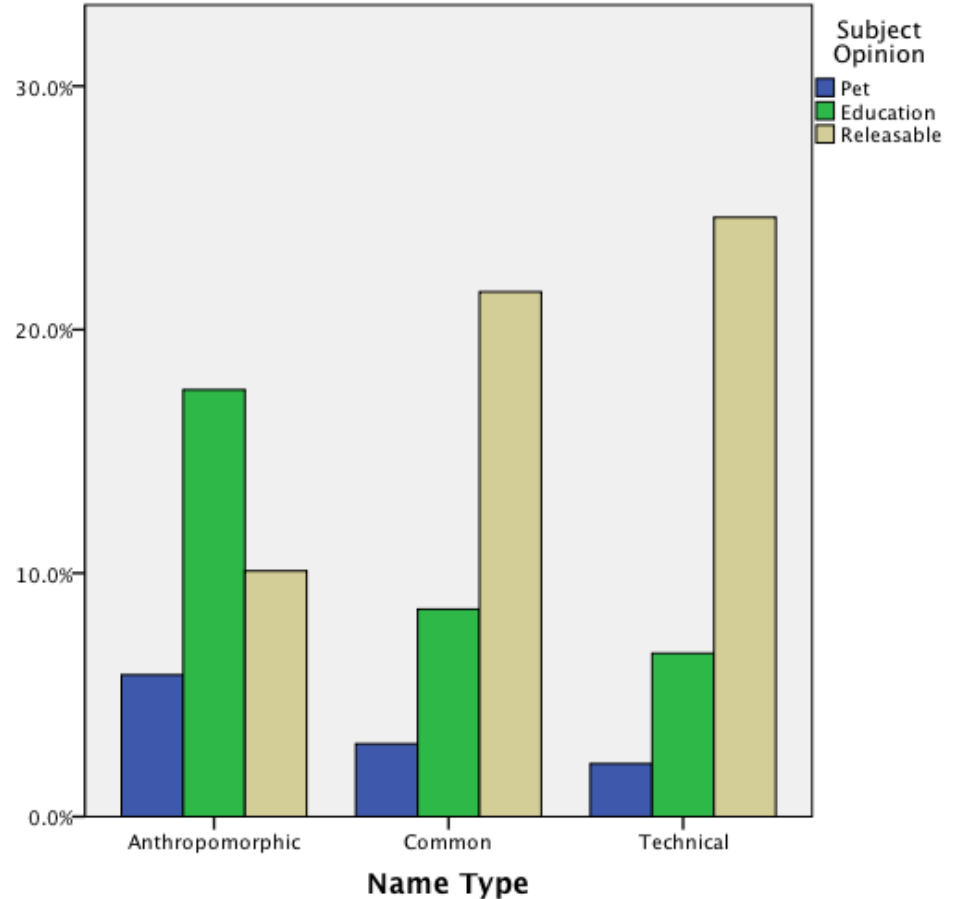
$X^2(2) = 1,331.929$      $p < .001$



# Opinion of Animal Status: Name Type

$X^2(2) = 718.304$   
 $< .001$

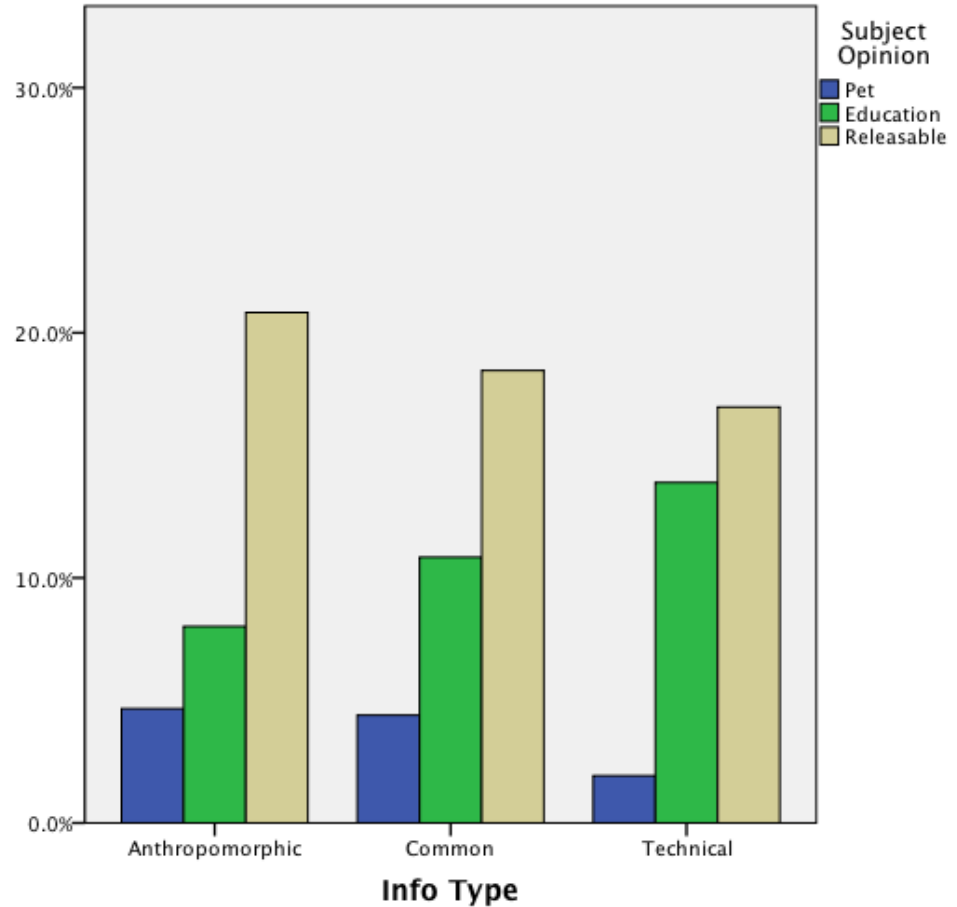
p



# Opinion of Animal Status: Info Type

$X^2(2) = 16.289$   
 $< .001$

p



A silhouette of a bird, possibly a crow or raven, is perched on a ledge inside a cage. The cage is represented by vertical bars. The background is a light yellow color with a wavy, horizontal band across the middle.

## Caveats:

- Respondents not asked if they knew someone involved with rehabilitation.
- Considerations were made on final disposition instead of current situation
- Some did not believe wildlife as pets or education so answers reflected personal beliefs not what was read/seen



# Comments

## 154 responses:

- “I do not like this survey and did not complete it...”
- “The cat cottontails should be releasable as long as that exposure to cat stops...”
- “...the cottontails with the cat...you can put them under the heading of "cat food", as it is none of the other choices.”
- “I don't believe wild animals should be pets under any circumstances.”
- “..."should be euthanized" option not available”
- “Great survey! This is for those people who like to post pictures of wildlife while treating them like pets that are not doing them favors raising them like this. They are just going to get people hurt or make them an easy meal....They give off the wrong perception and hurt the reputation for the rest of us”





# Discussion

- Does imagery impact perception?
- Does terminology impact perception?
- Does naming impact perception?
- Does not/using PPE impact perception?
- Does the species impact perception?
- Does the condition impact perception?



# Best Practices

Use personal protective equipment (PPE)

Use species names

Use appropriate backgrounds for pictures

Use proper handling techniques